The Los Angeles Native Flora Fauna Guide

Introduction

The Los Angeles Native Flora Fauna Guide is a **free** beginner-friendly guide to common local living things. It is intended for use as a starter resource for all members of the Los Angeles County community.

Knowledge as Power

When people think of wildlife and nature, they often picture lions and giraffes in the African savannah, polar bears in the arctic, vivid corals in the Great Barrier Reef, and rainforests in the Amazon. We are incredibly familiar with these distant, exotic ecosystems, but lack basic knowledge on our own local ecosystems. Though Los Angeles is often dismissed as urban or barren, we are actually within one of only 36 biodiversity hotspots globally. Within Los Angeles, there are kelp forests, wetlands, coastal chaparral, pine forests, oak woodland, rocky reefs, grasslands, deserts, seagrass beds, *and more*. These ecosystems are home to over 4,000 species, including 52 endangered species.

Despite this, knowledge about native species on a local and global scale remains highly limited. Studies show 83% of children ages 5-16 cannot identify a bumblebee, and 82% cannot recognize a native oak leaf nor identify just ten plants or animals native to their homes[1]. However, children are capable of correctly identifying 1,000 corporate logos and 120/150 species of Pokémon, which is substantially better than their identification of common wildlife[2]. Clearly we are capable of complex identification, and with the steady popularity of fictional species identification games, it is clear that the desire to learn remains, but the real-life resources are lacking.

Accessible resources for native plant and animal identification are a necessity for addressing environmental apathy and nature deficit disorders. Simply having an *awareness* of the species around you is shown to contribute to a significantly more accurate comprehension of their ecological relevance[3]. Native environmentalism allows us to recognize nature in our backyards and engage with nature much more intimately, which is also proven to promote positive mental health and wellbeing[4]. This guide's intentions are, above all, to make nature familiar and accessible to Angelenos and contribute to the health and happiness of people and the environment.

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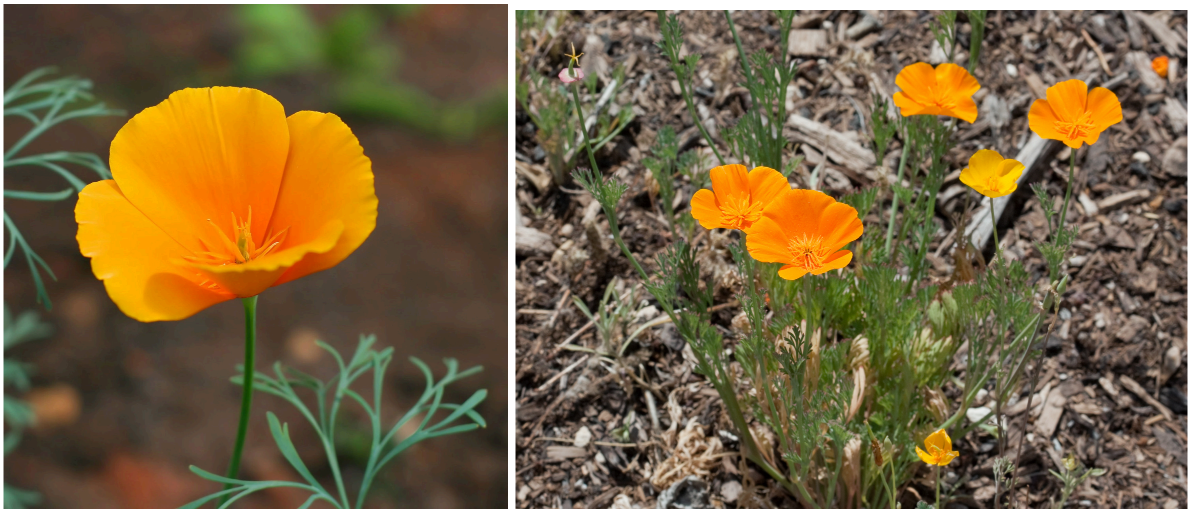
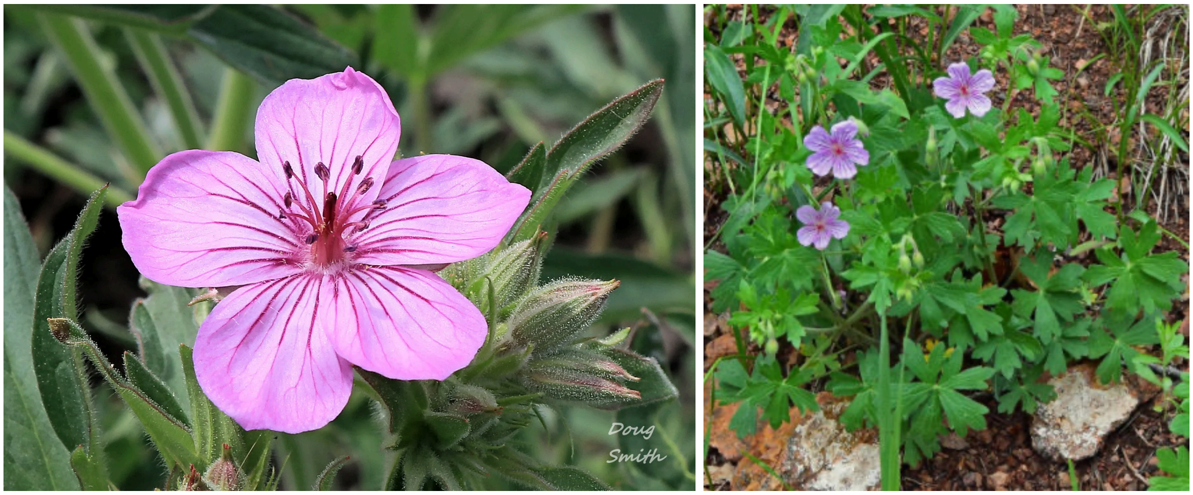
[1] https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/09/children-are-forgetting-the-names-for-plants-and-animals/
[2] https://medium.com/@kylecalian/the-loss-of-the-wild-pt-1-6e0caf2a9d4
[3] https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ppp3.10323
[4] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8125471/

FLORA

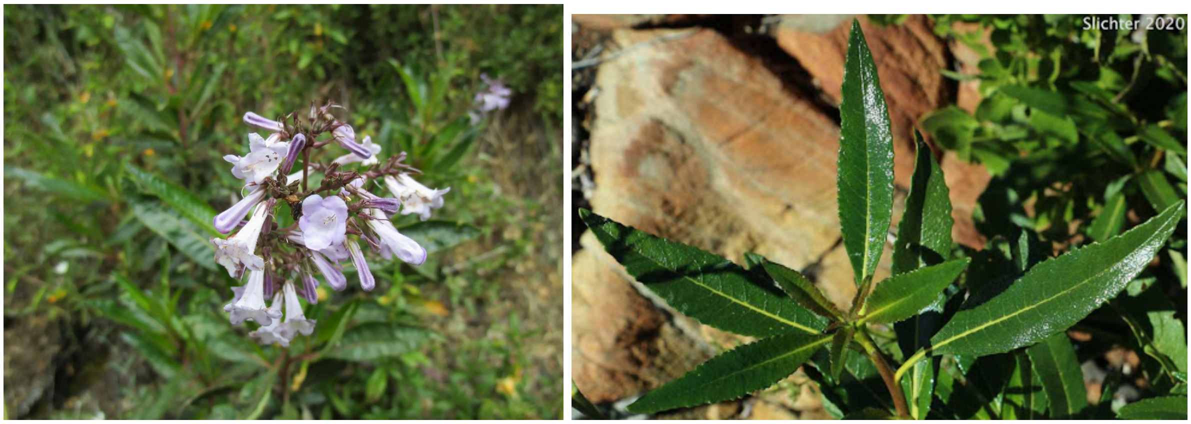
Flowers



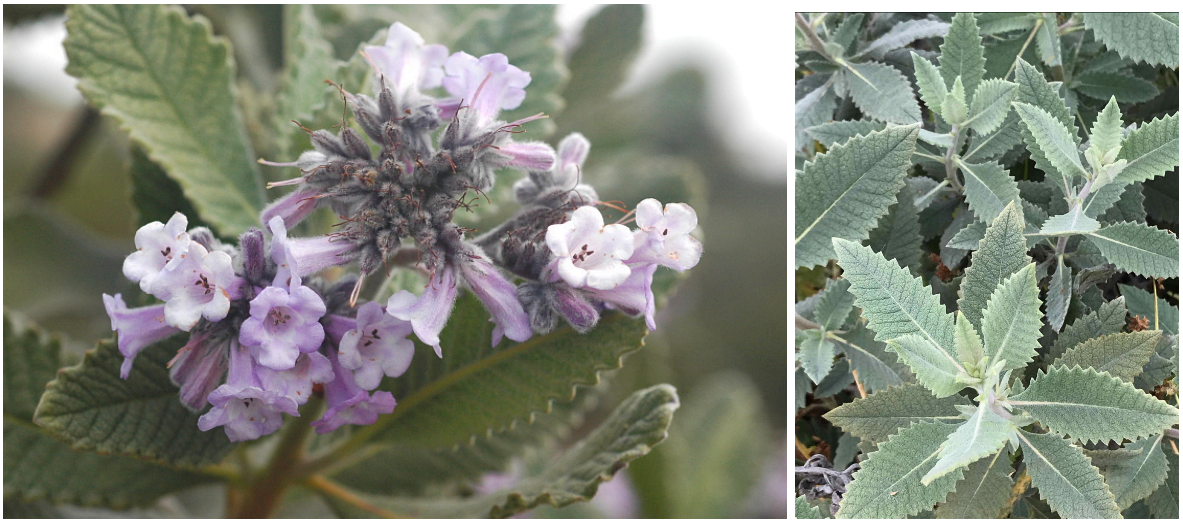
California poppy
Eschscholzia californica
The state flower of California.



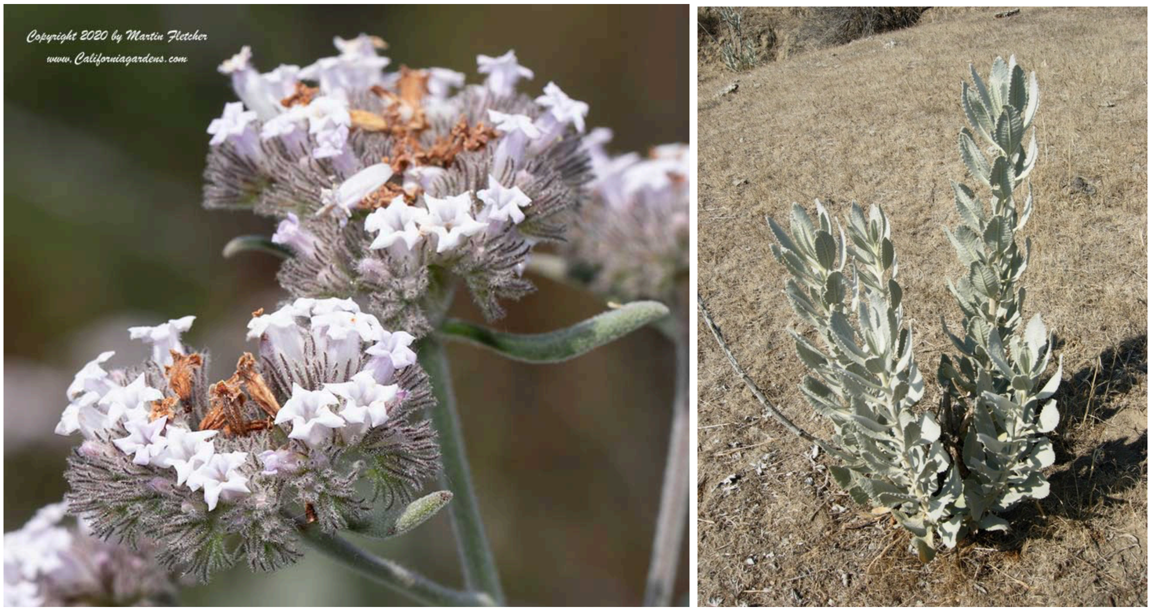
Sticky geranium
Geranium viscosissimum
Protocarnivorous: capable of dissolving insects stuck on its leaves.



California yerba santa
Eriodictyon californium
Used by tribes including the Chumash in treating respiratory issues and wounds.



Thickleaf yerba santa / felt leaved yerba santa
Eriodictyon crassifolium
Used by the Chumash to keep lungs clear.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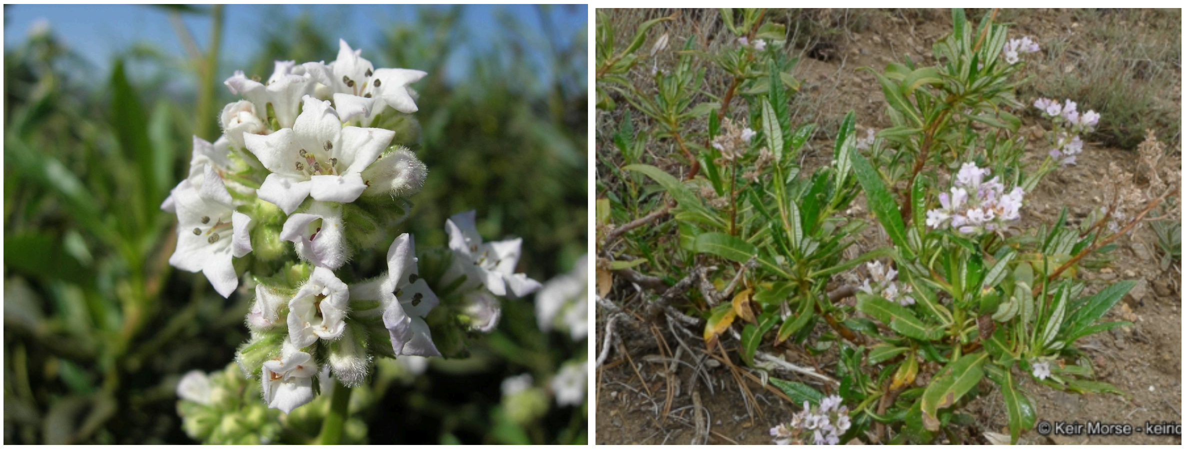
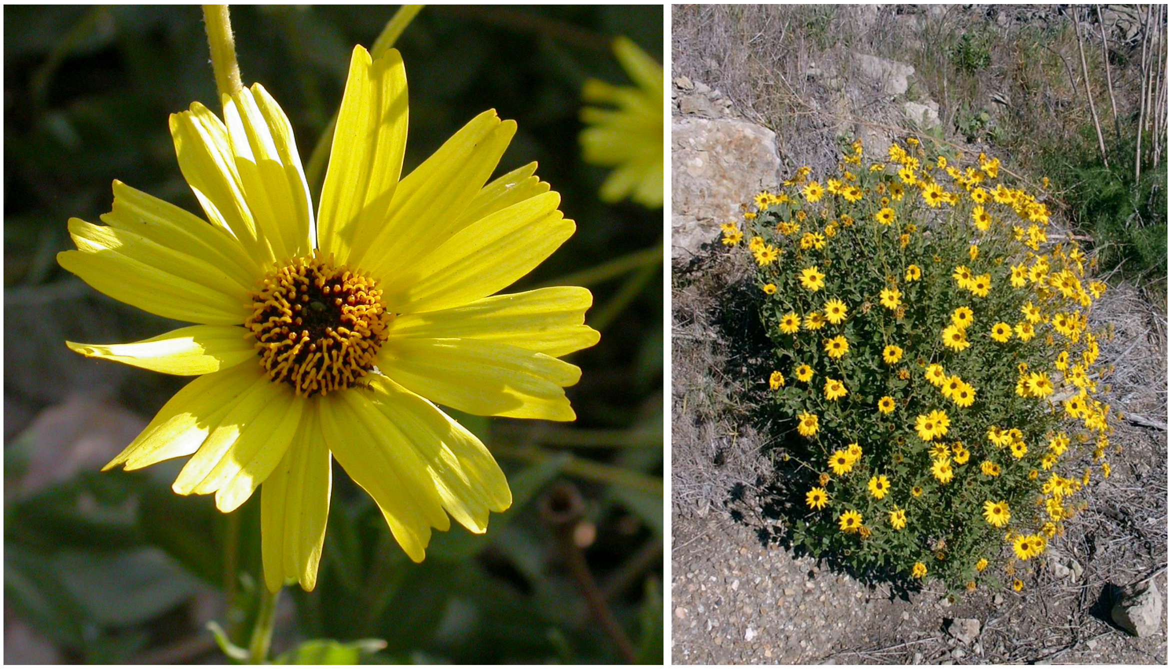
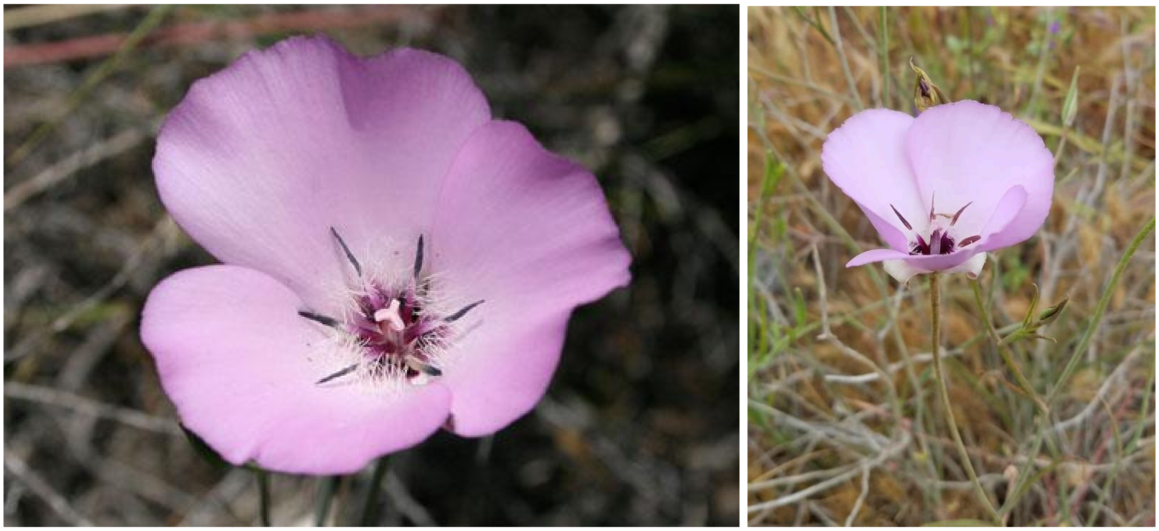
Wooly yerba santa
Eriodictyon tomentosum
Indigenous herbalist uses.


© Keir Morse - keirc

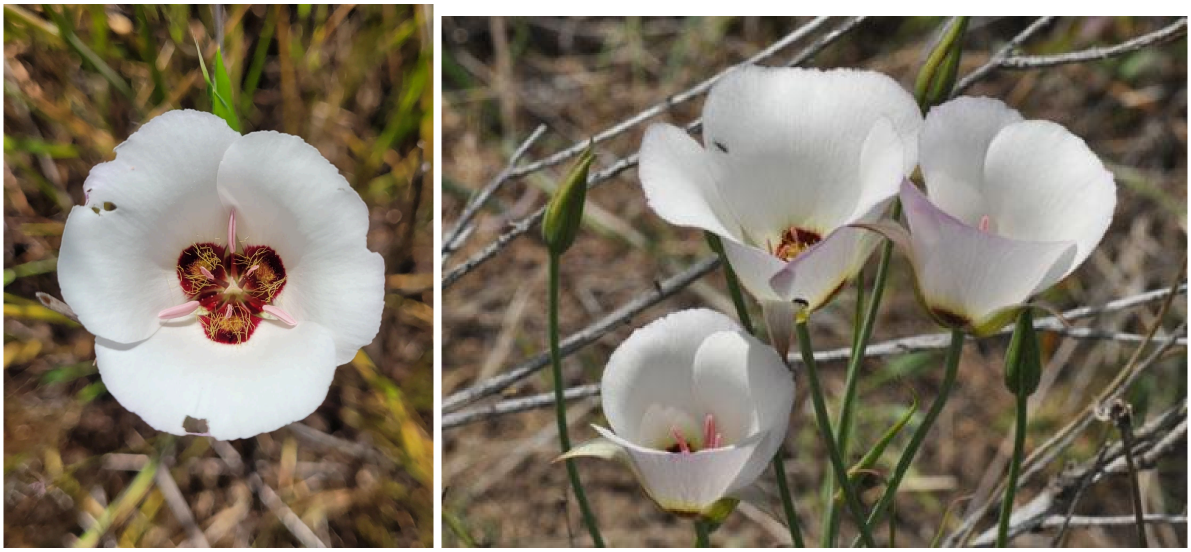
Hairy yerba santa
Eriodictyon trichocalyx
Used by the Chumash and Cahuilla to treat tired limbs as well as other ailments.



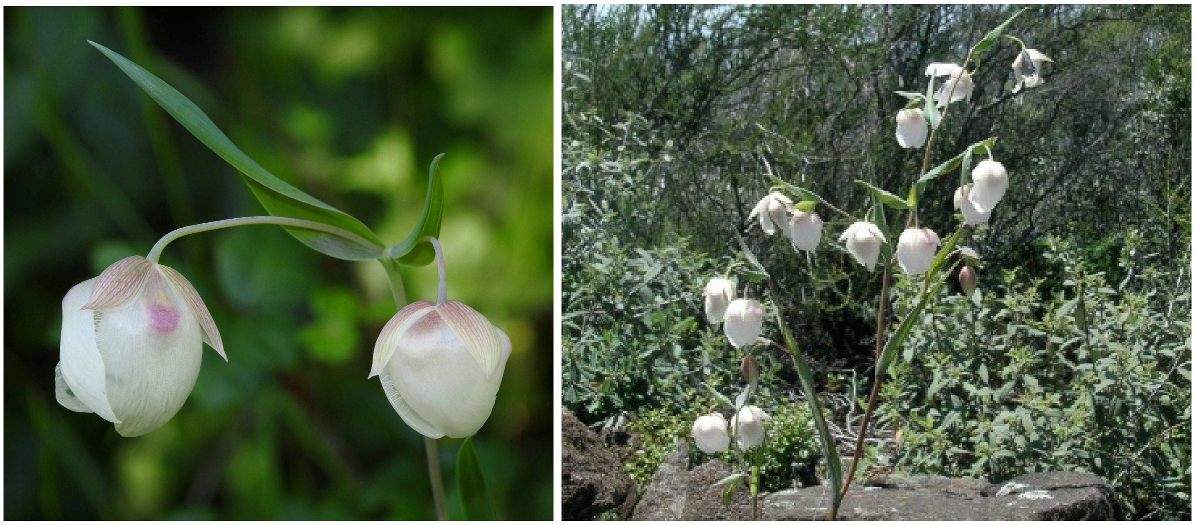
California bush sunflower / California brittlebush
Encelia californica
Attracts bees, insects, and butterflies, including the threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly.



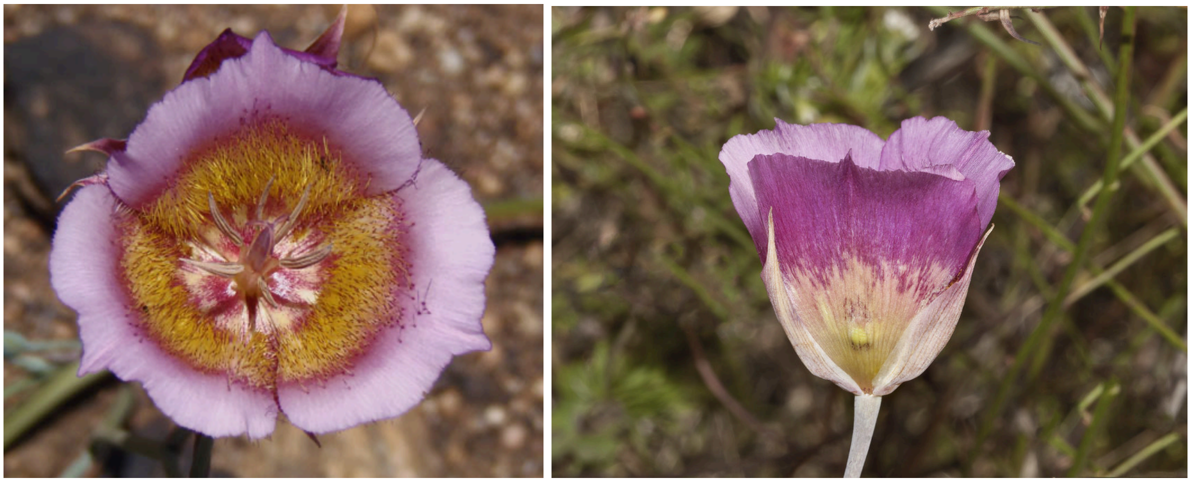
Splendid mariposa lily
Calochortus splendens
Found in dry chaparral.



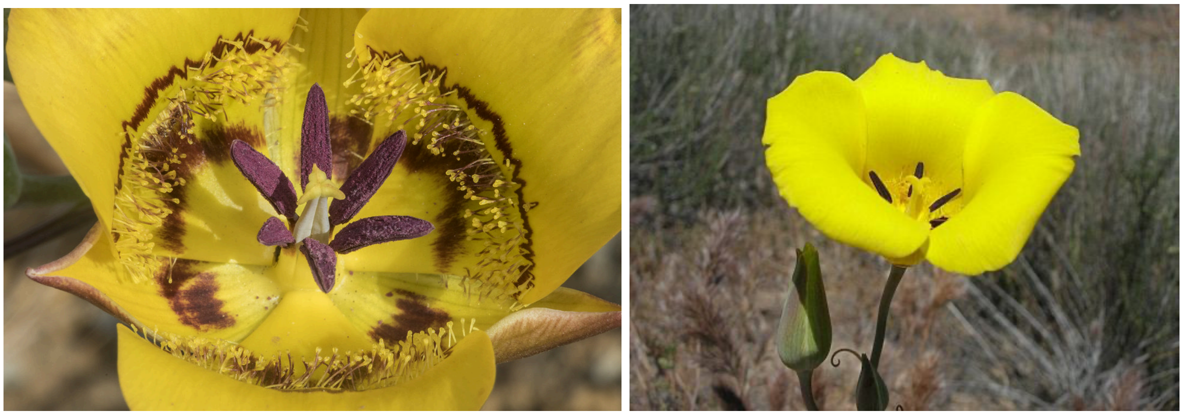
Catalina mariposa lily
Calochortus catalinae
Named for its prevalence on the Channel Islands.



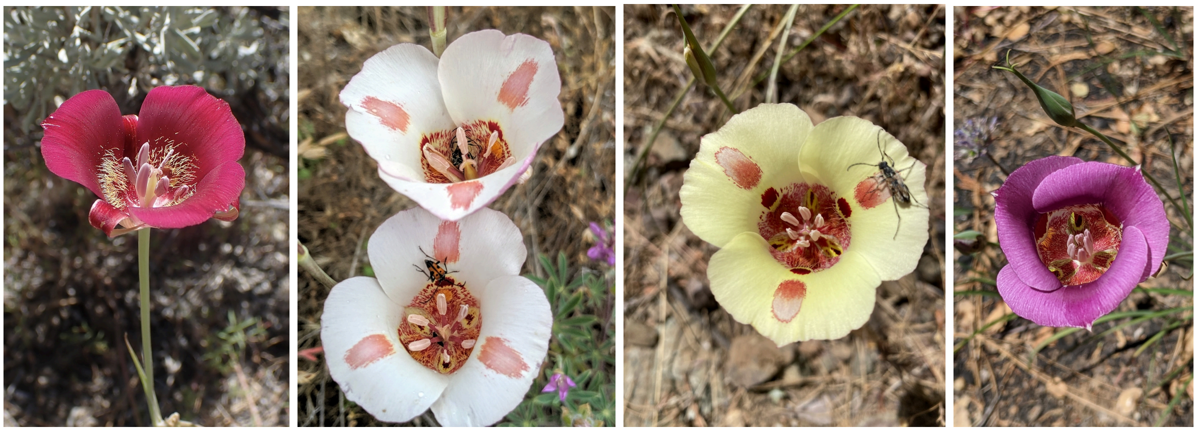
White fairy lantern
Calochortus albus
Also known as pink fairy lantern, white globe lily, alabaster tulip, snow drops, and more.



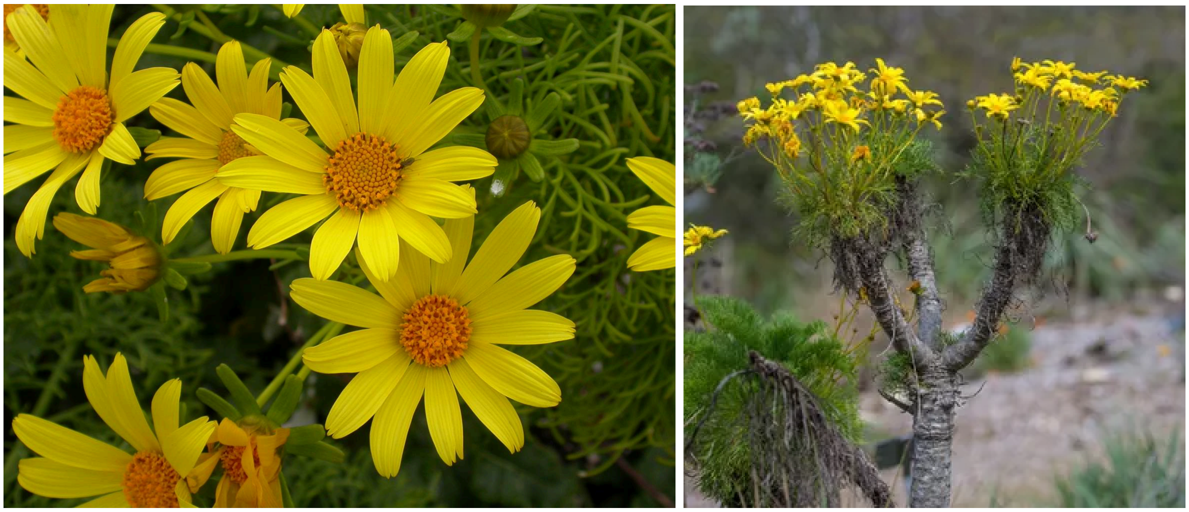
Plummer’s mariposa lily
Calochortus plummerae



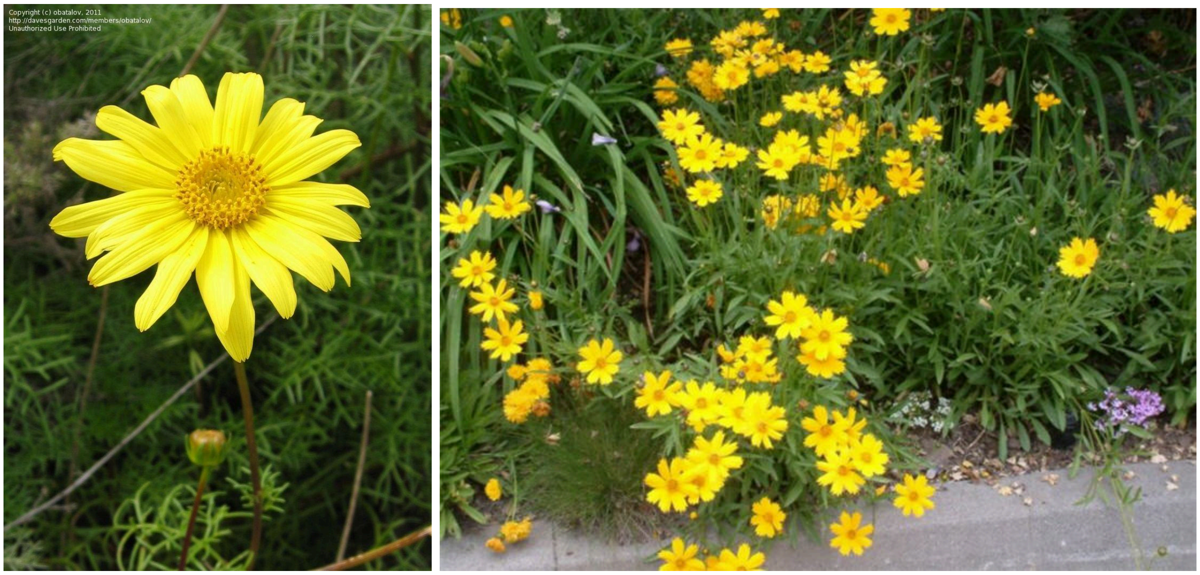
Slender mariposa lily
Calochortus clavus



Butterfly mariposa lily
Calochortus venustus
Displays a wide variety of colors.



Giant coreopsis
Coreopsis gigantea
Blooms from spring to early summer.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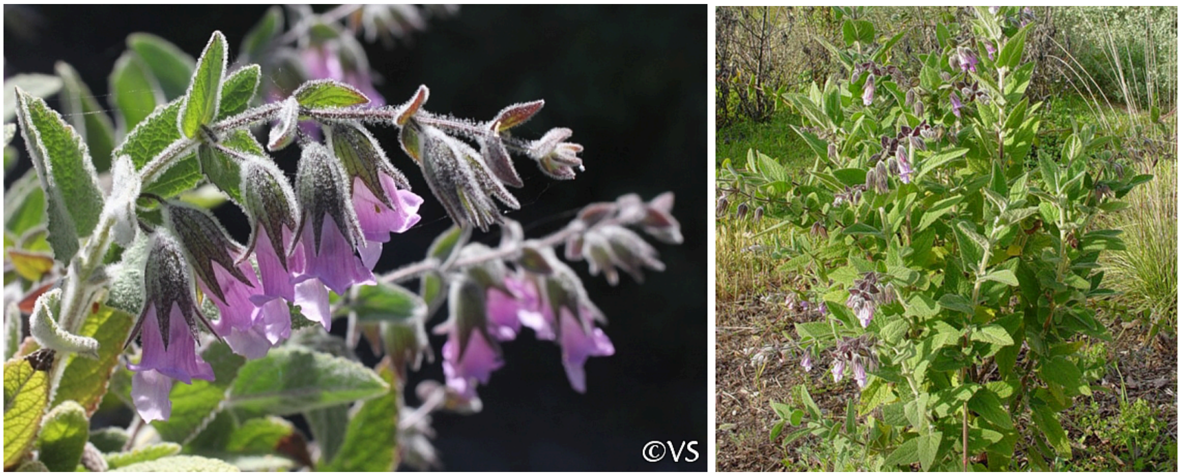
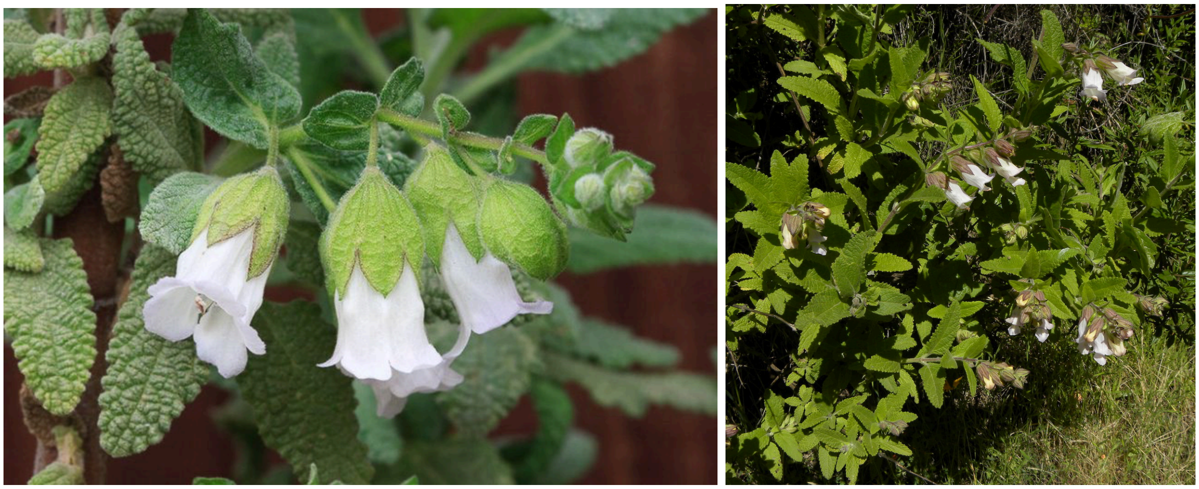
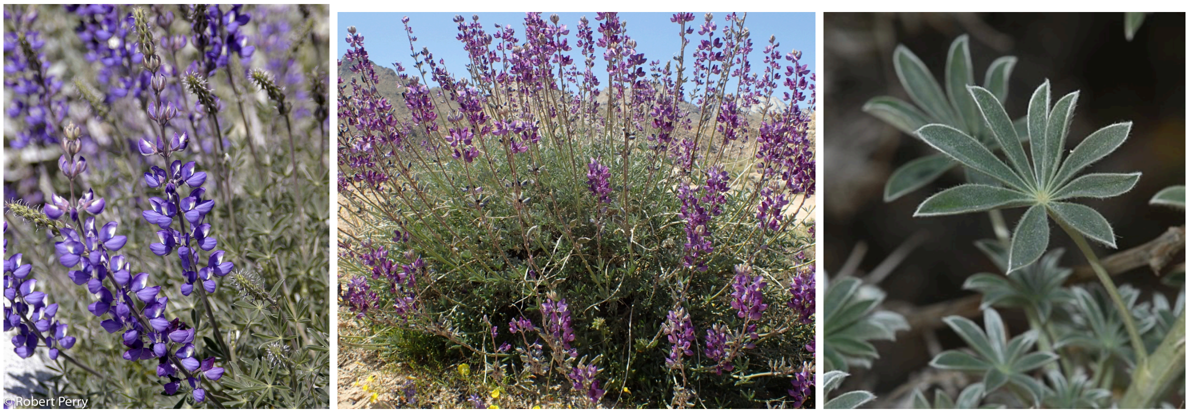
Sea dahlia
Coreopsis maritima
Bloom in late winter to early summer along the coast.



Fragrant pitcher sage
Lepechinia fragrans
A member of the mint family, attracts hummingbirds, moths, and butterflies.

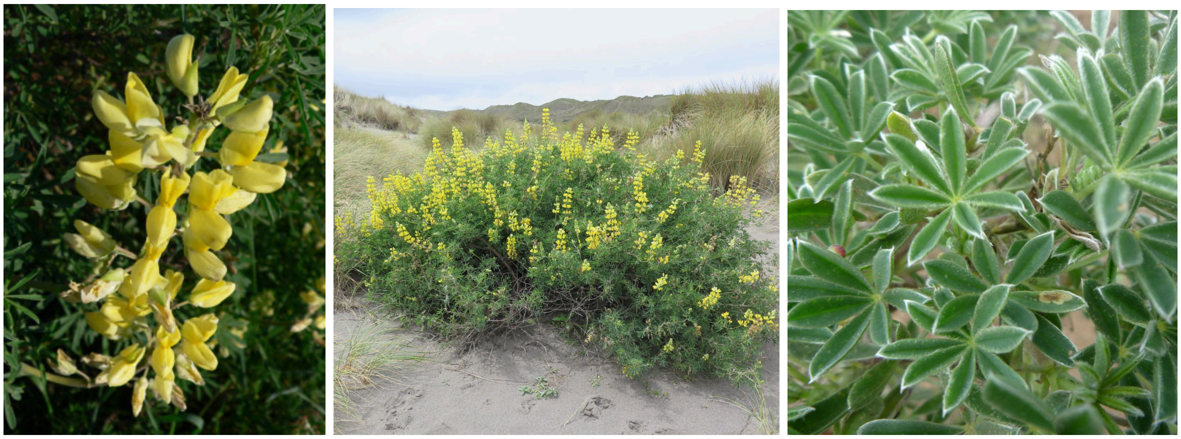


White pitcher sage
Lepechinia calycina
A member of the mint family, used by the Miwok people to treat fever and headaches.

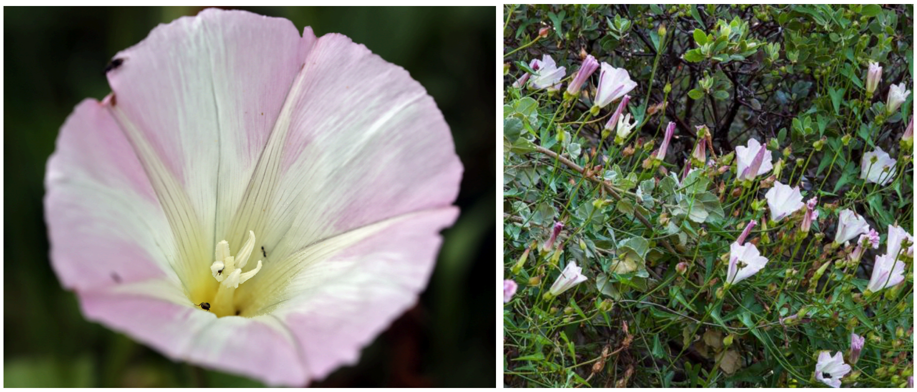


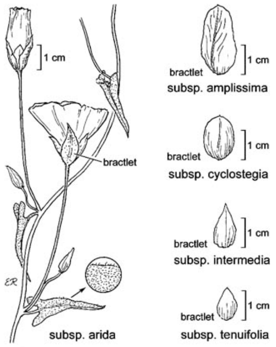
Desert bush lupine / grape soda lupine

Lupinus excubitus / Lupinus albifrons (species distinction obscured)
Sweet scent said to be reminiscent of grape soda.



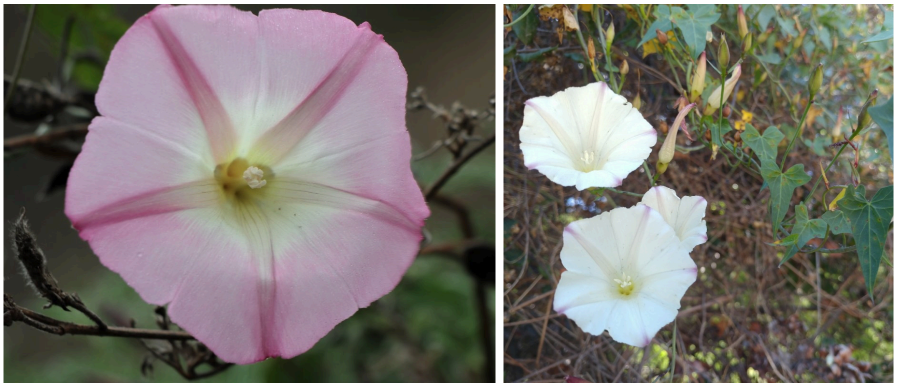
Yellow bush lupine
Lupinus arboreus
Native range debated, and known invasive in western Europe and Australia.

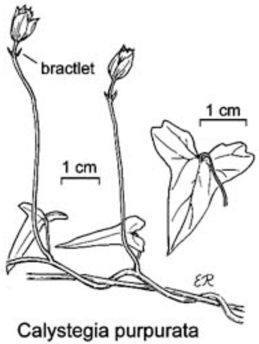



1 cm
bractlet
ER
subsp. arida
bractlet
1 cm
subsp. amplissima
bractlet
1 cm
subsp. cyclostegia
bractlet
1 cm
subsp. intermedia
bractlet
1 cm
subsp. tenuifolia

Calystegia macrostegia
© Regents of the University of California

Coast/island morning glory
Calystegia macrostegia
Vine which produces white, pale pink, or lavender blooms.

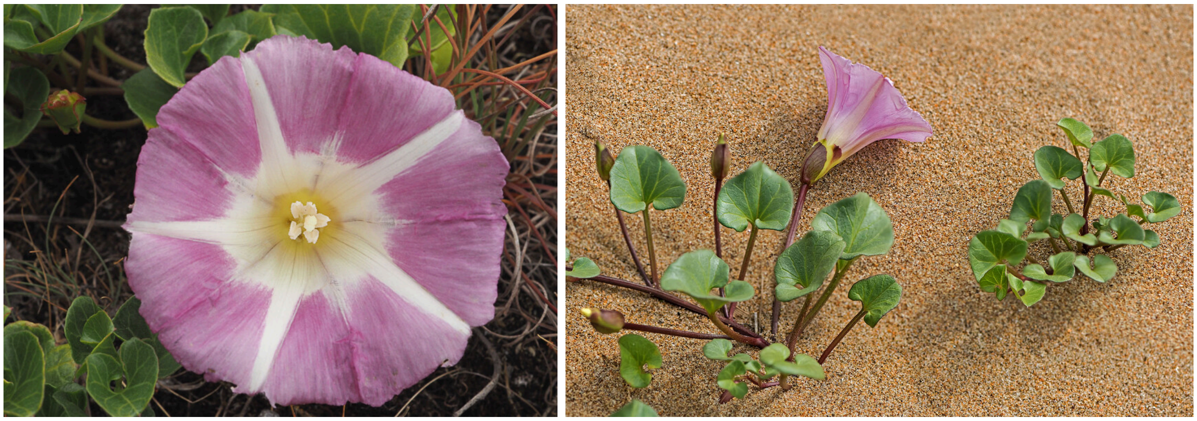



bractlet
1 cm
1 cm
ER

Calystegia purpurata
subsp. purpurata

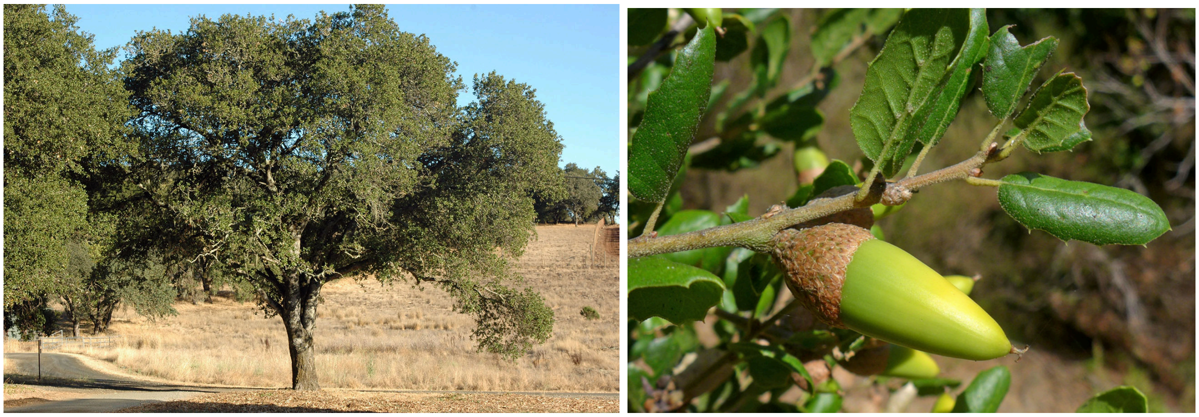
Western morning glory
Calystegia purpurata

Can generally be distinguished from *macrostegia* by thicker leaves and/or striped flowers.

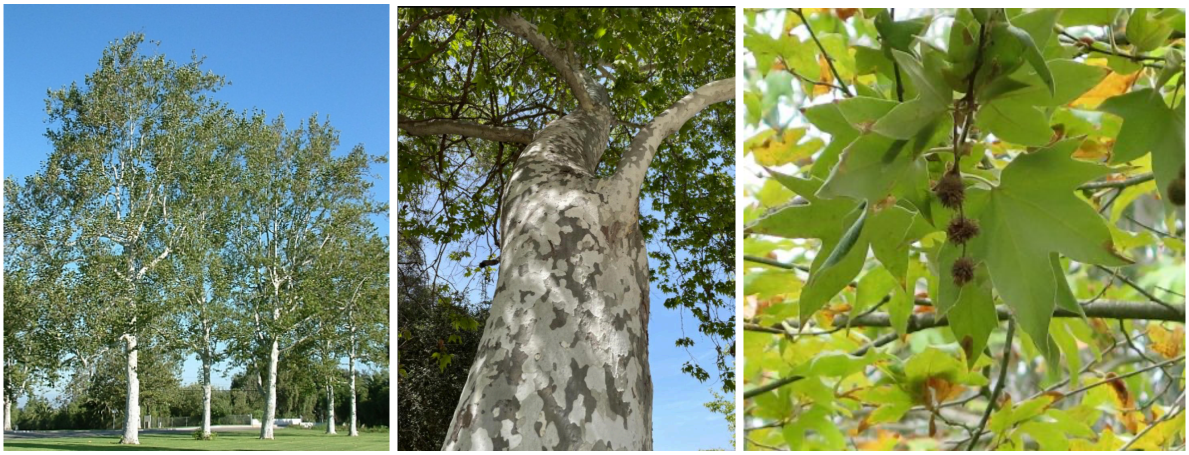


Beach morning glory
Calystegia soldanella

Trees



Coast live oak
Quercus agrifolia



California sycamore

Platanus racemosa

FAUNA

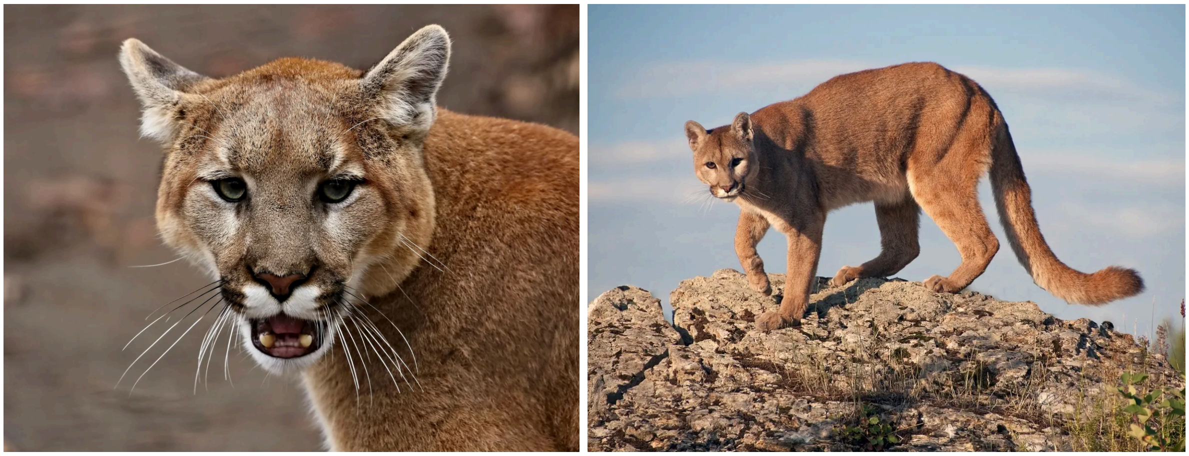
Vertebrates

Mammals

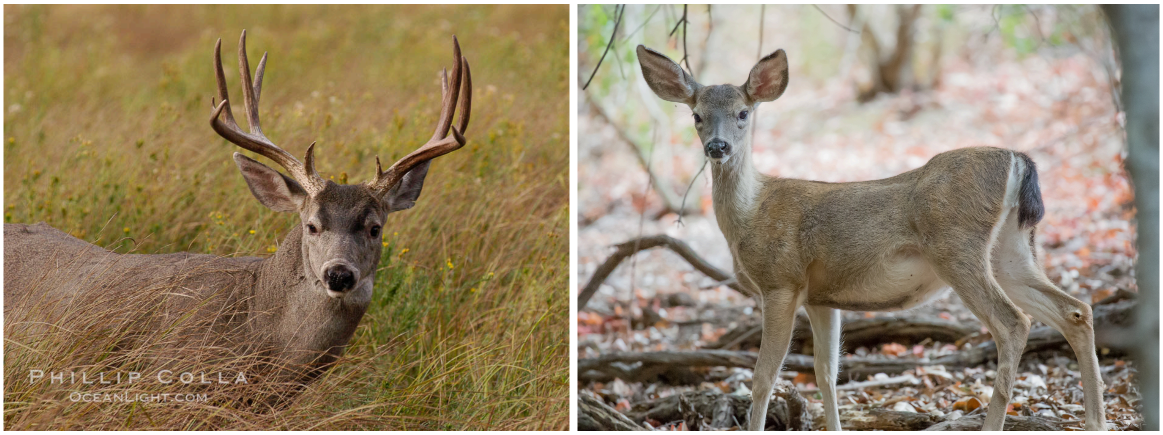
Land mammals

Coyote
Canis latrans

Bobcat
Lynx rufus



Mountain lion
Puma concolor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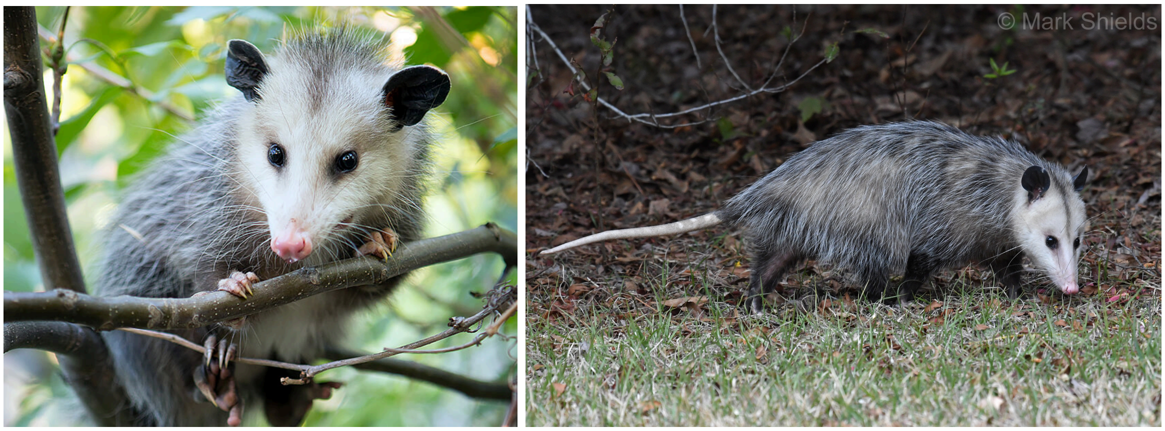
Mule deer
Odocoileus hemionus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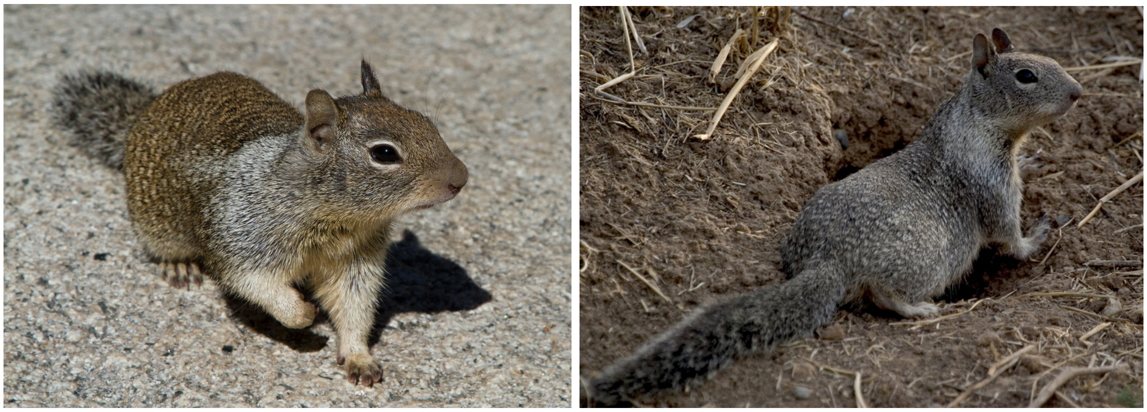
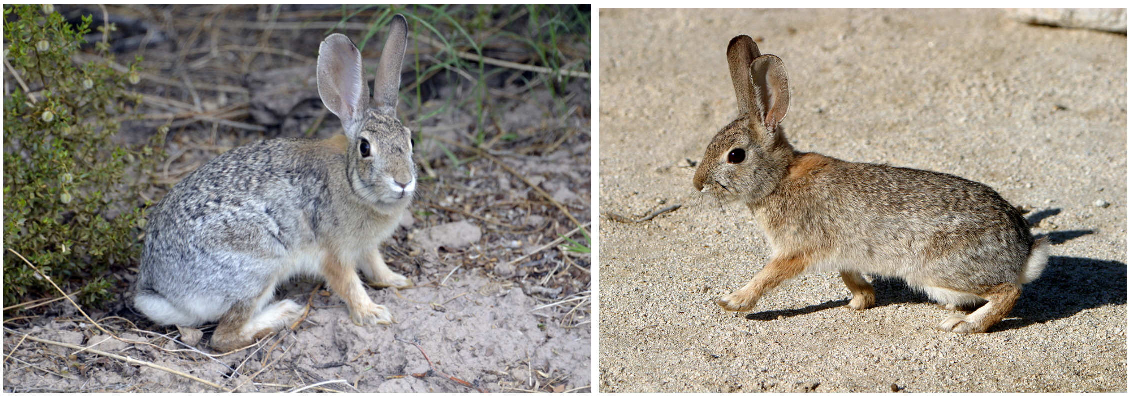
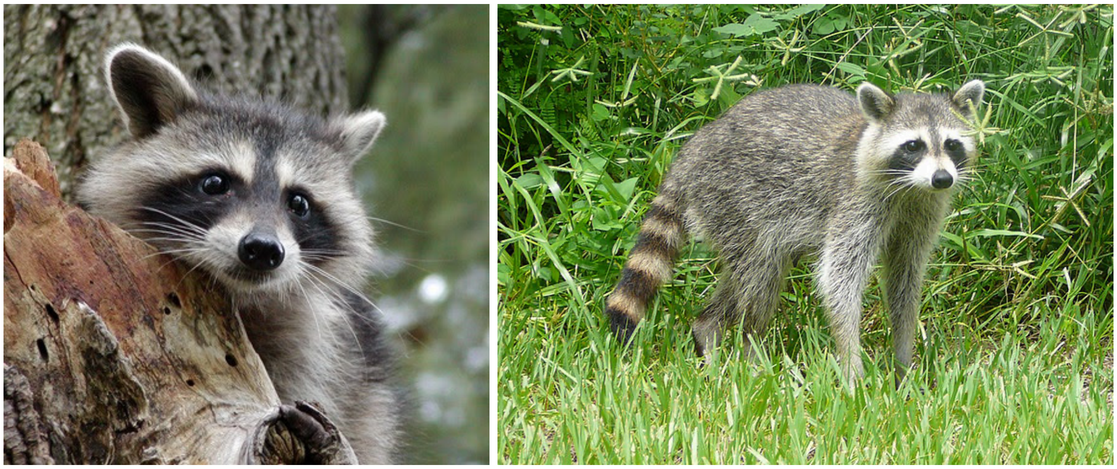
Virginia opossum
Didelphis virginiana



California ground squirrel
Otospermophilus beecheyi

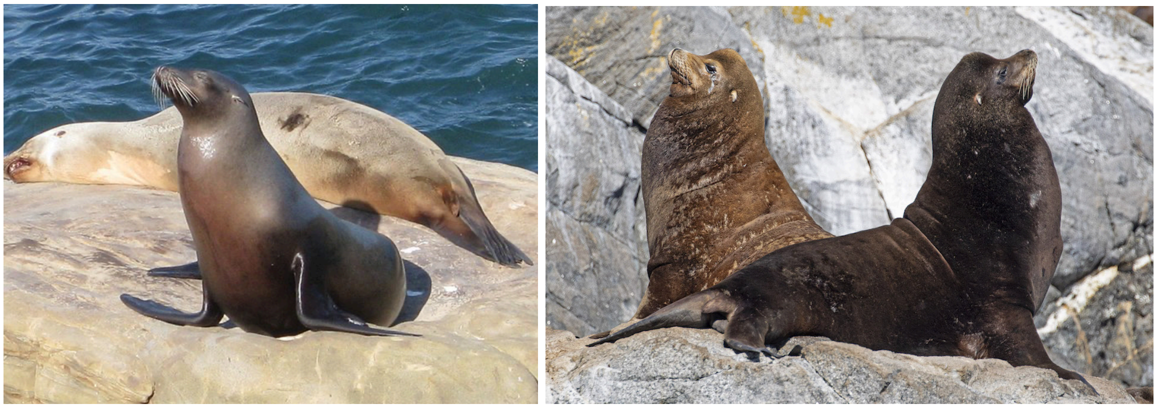


Desert cottontail
Sylvilagus audubonii

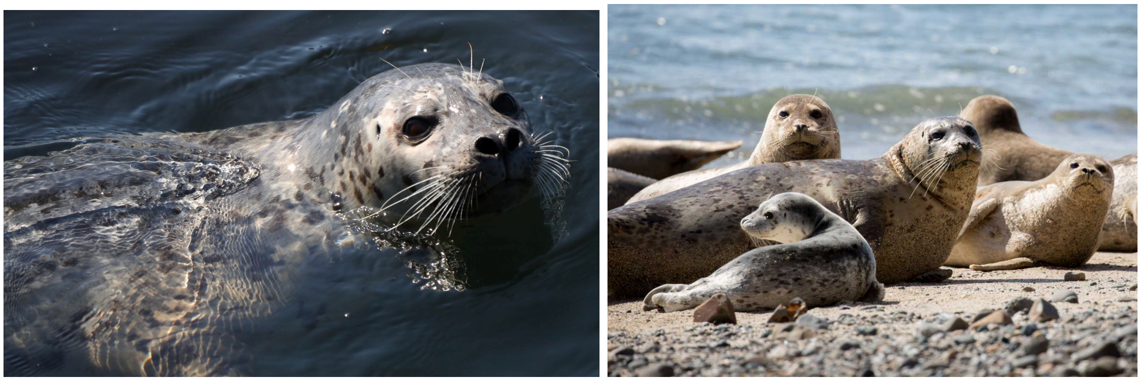


Common raccoon
Procyon lotor

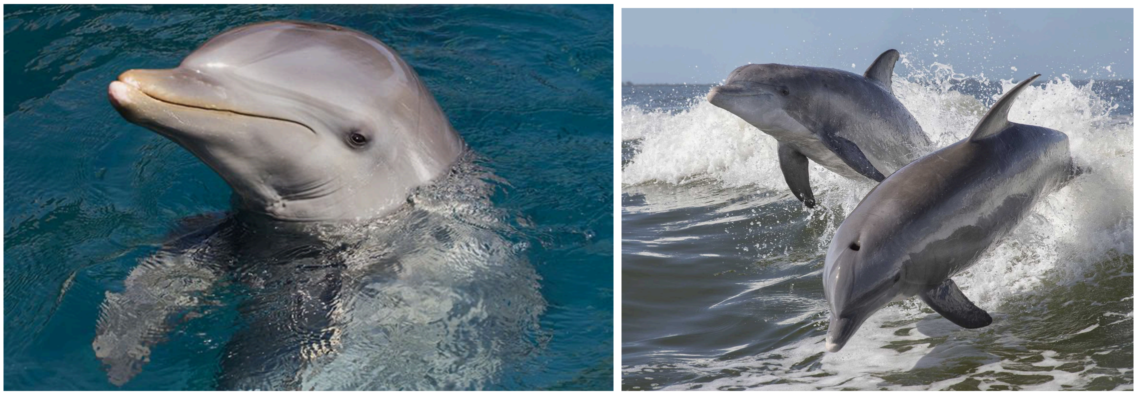
Marine mammals



California sea lion
Zalophus californianus
Can be distinguished from seals by large flippers, brown body, ear flaps, and loud barking.

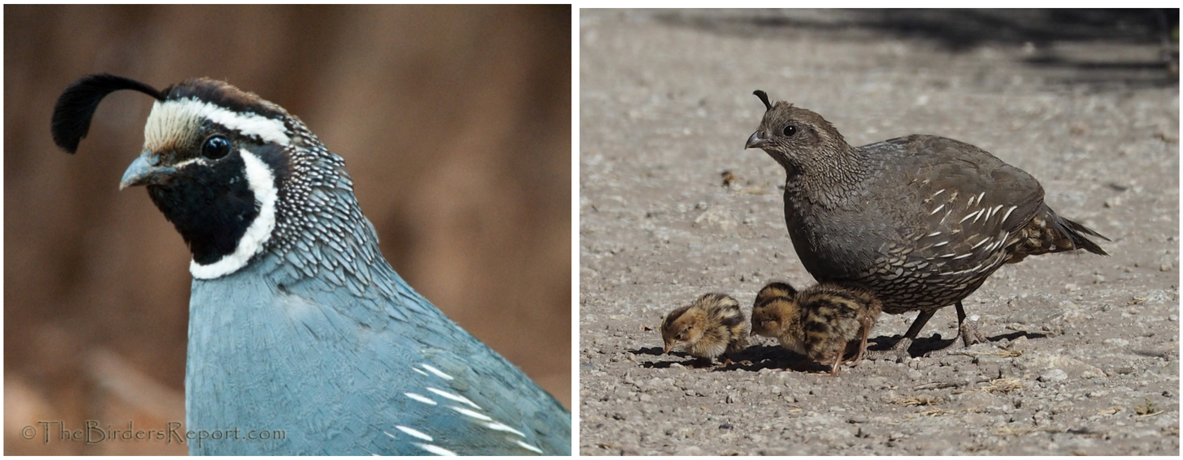


California harbor seal
Phoca vitulina
Can be distinguished from sea lions by short snout, short flippers, and grey speckled body.



Common bottlenose dolphin
Tursiops truncatus

Birds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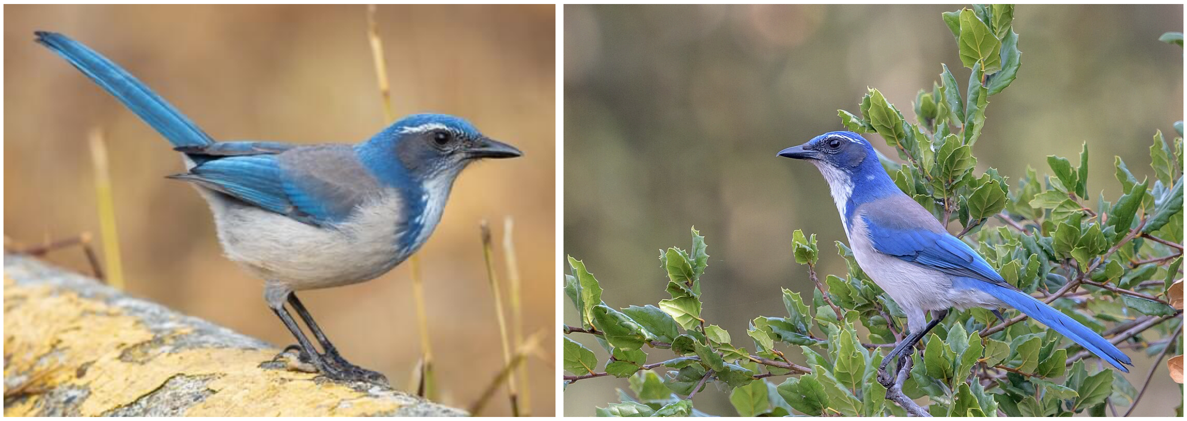
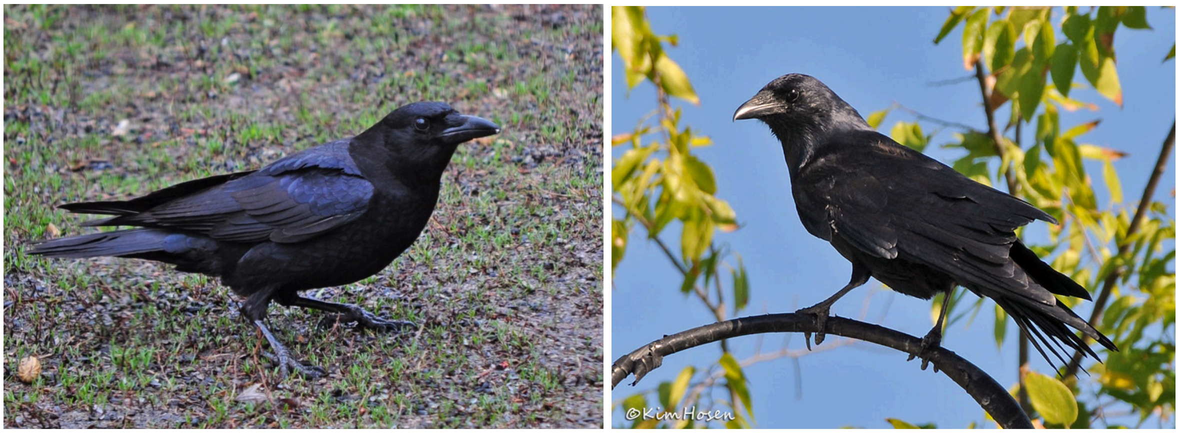
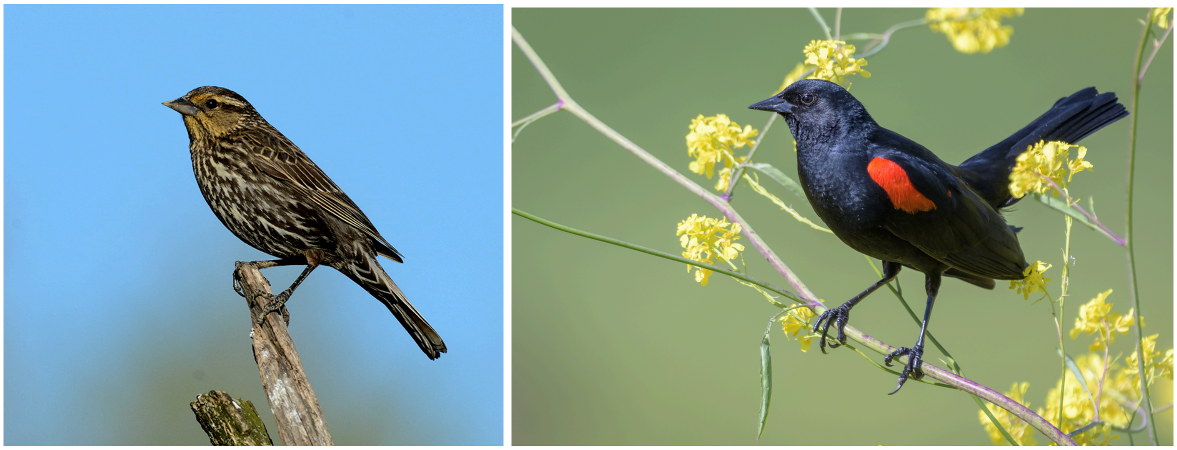
California quail
Callipepla californica



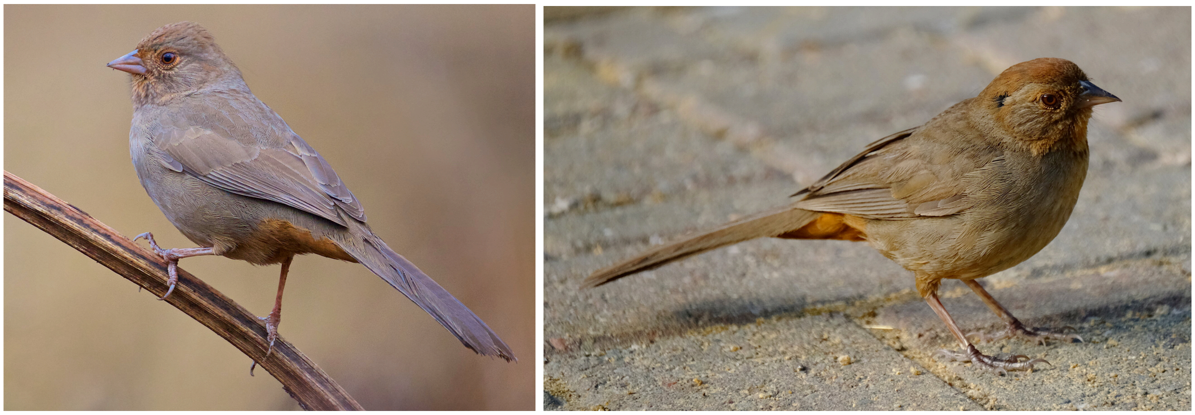
California scrub jay
Aphelocoma californica



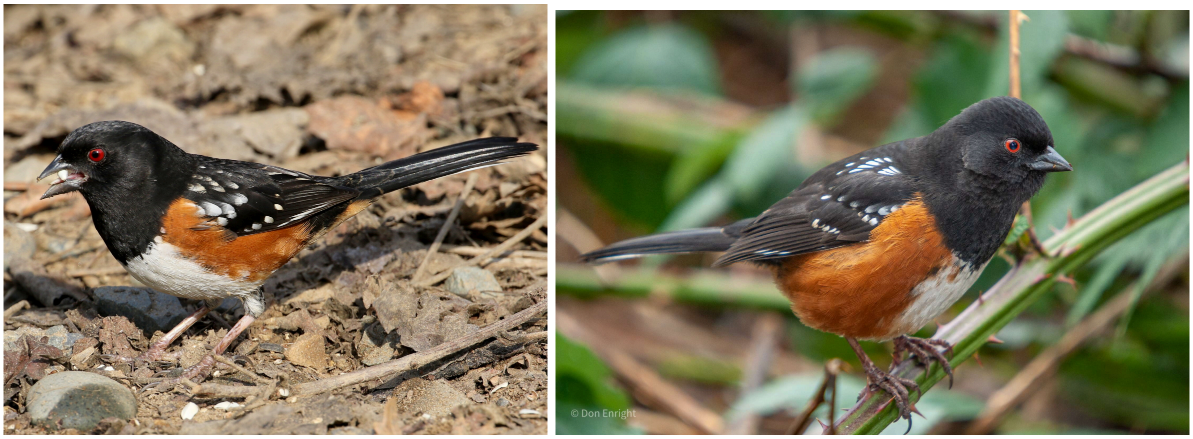
American crow
Corvus brachyrhynchos



Red winged blackbird
Agelaius phoeniceus
Female (left) and male (right).

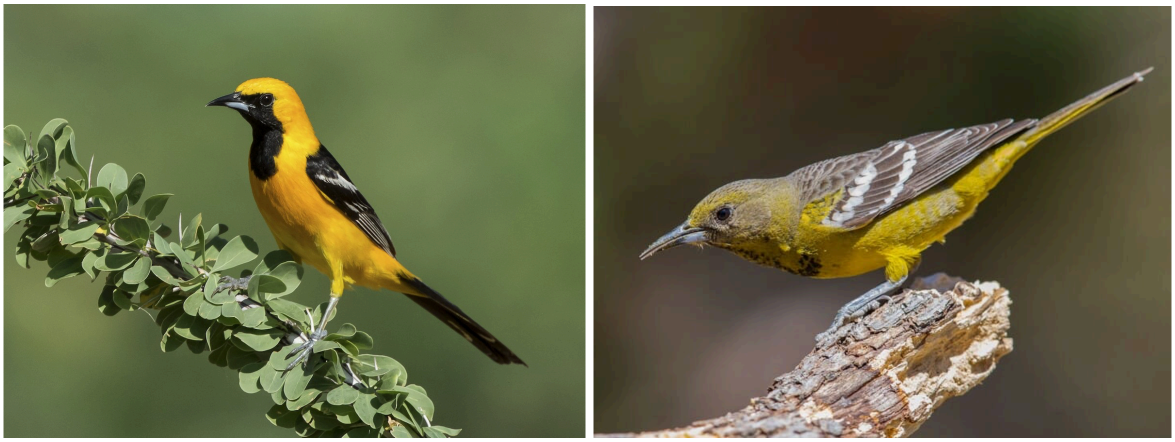


California towhee
Melozone crissalis



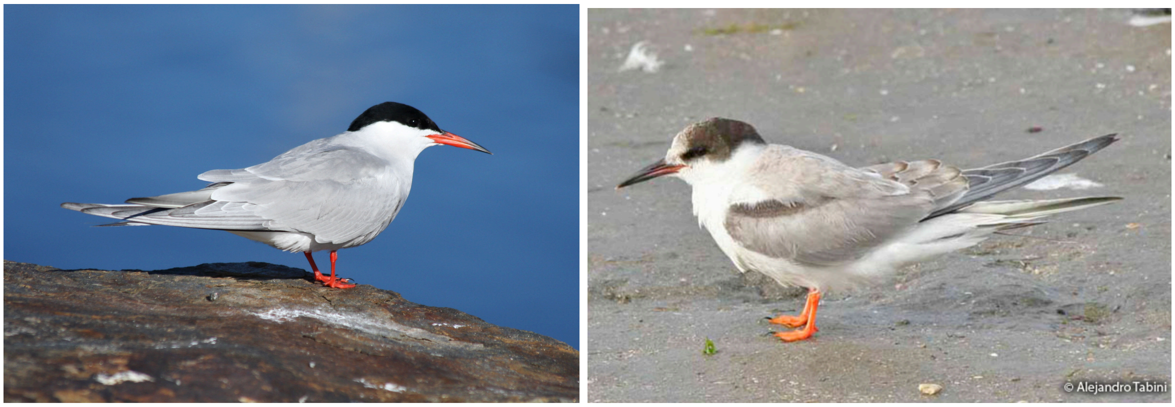
© Don Enright

Spotted towhee
Pipilo maculatus



Hooded oriole
Icterus cucullatus
Male (left) and female (right).

Seabirds



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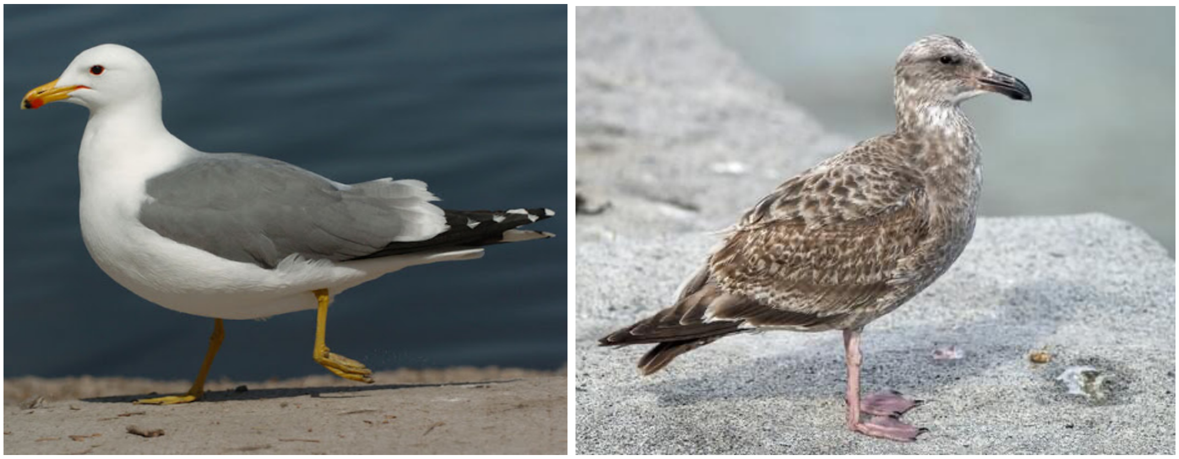
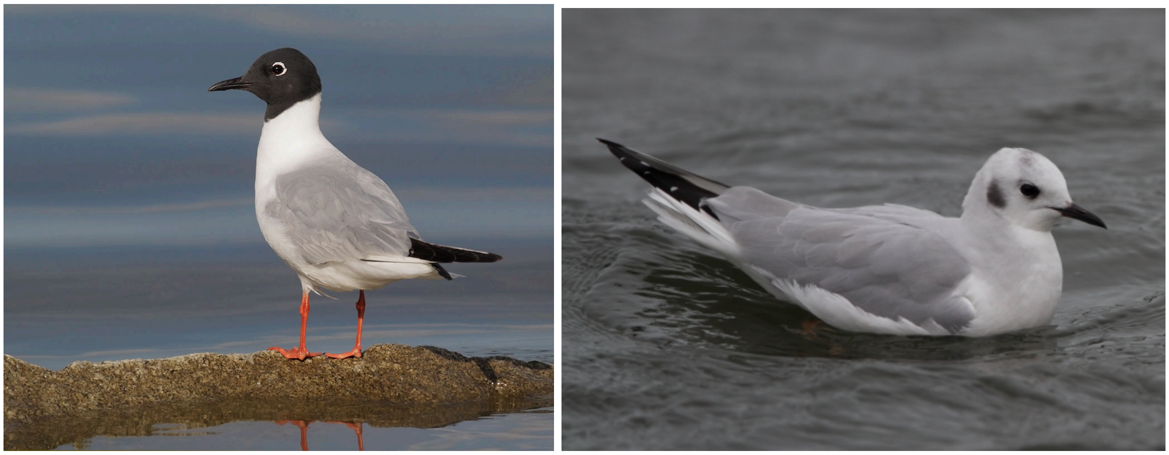
Common tern
Sterna hirundo
Adult (left) and juvenile (right).

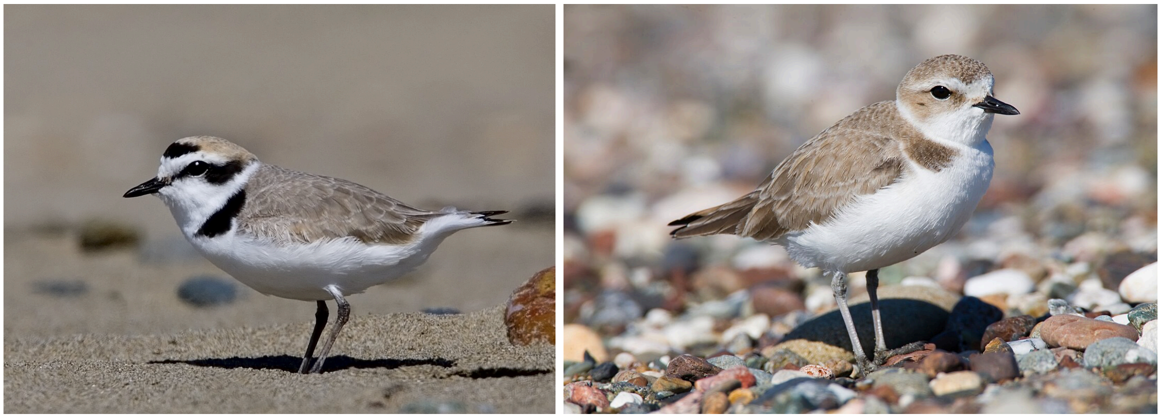


California gull

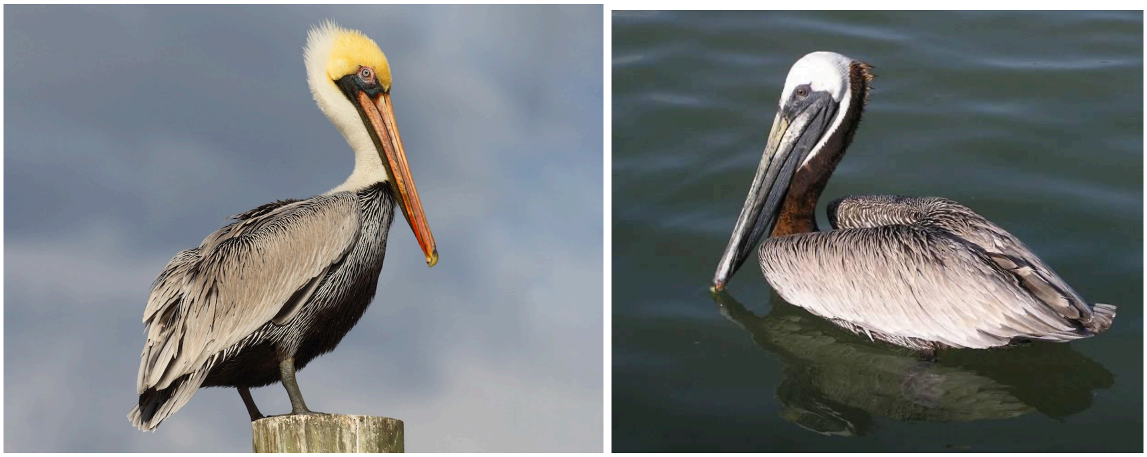
Larus californicus
Adult (left) and juvenile (right).



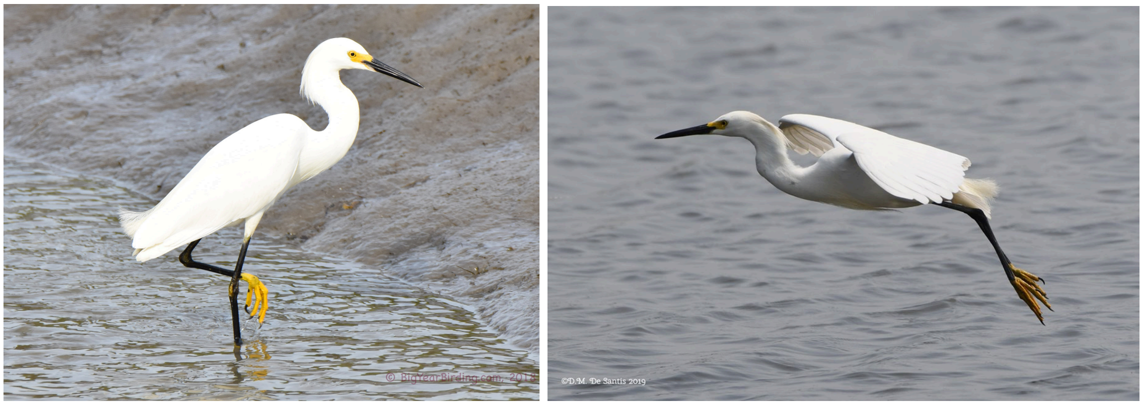
Bonaparte’s gull
Chroicocephalus philadelphia
Adult (left) and juvenile (right).



Snowy plover
Charadrius nivosus



California brown pelican
Pelecanus occidentalis californicus
Adult (left) and juvenile (right).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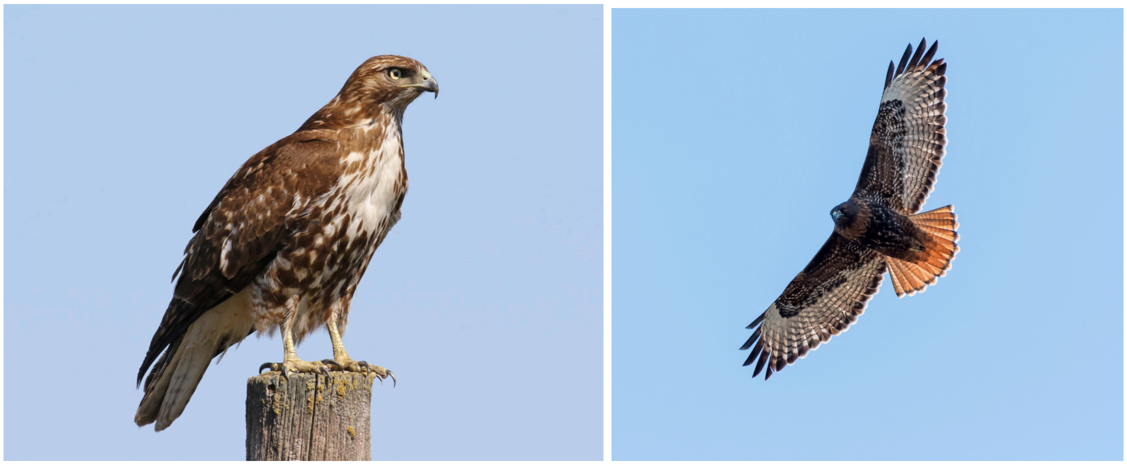
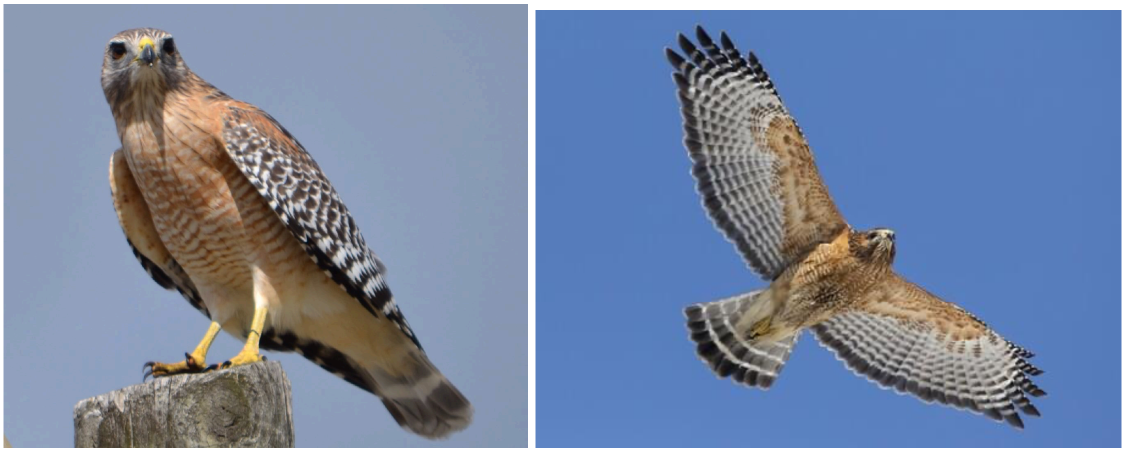
Snowy egret
Egretta thula

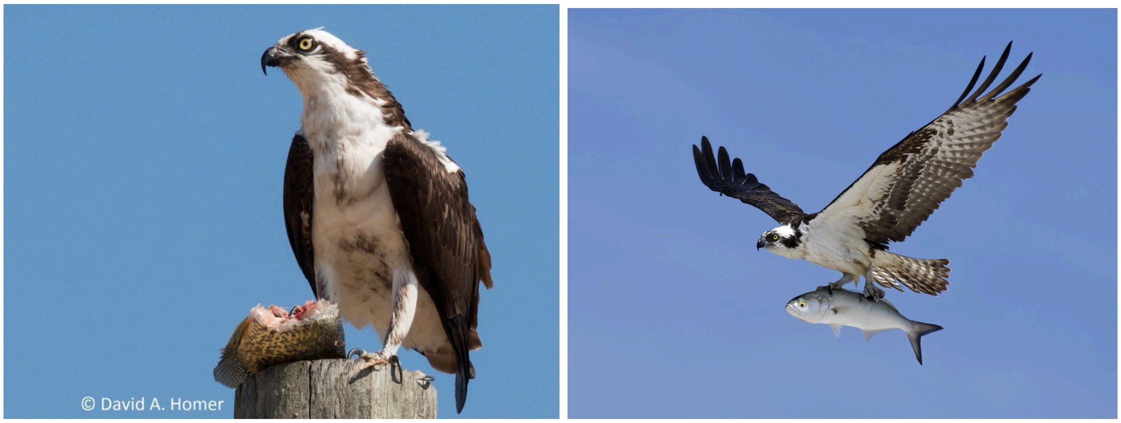
Birds of prey



Red tailed hawk
Buteo jamaicensis



Red shouldered hawk
Buteo lineatus



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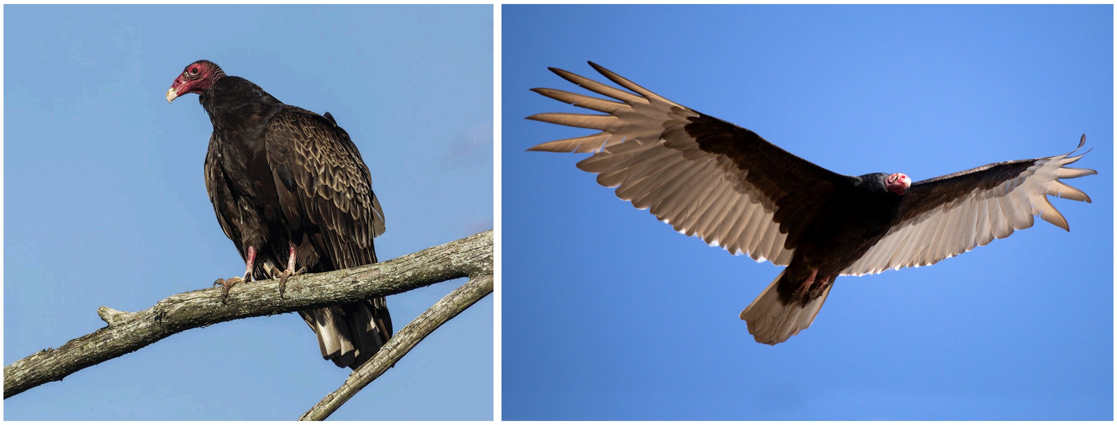
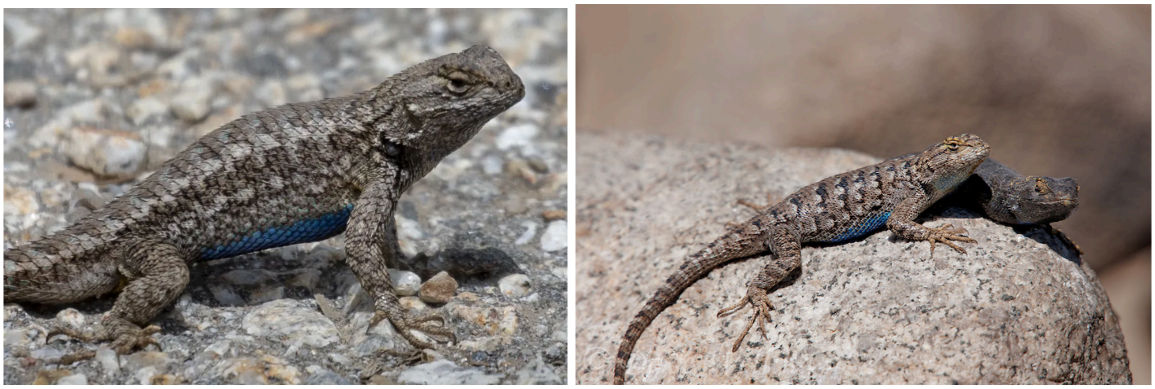
Osprey
Pandion haliaetus

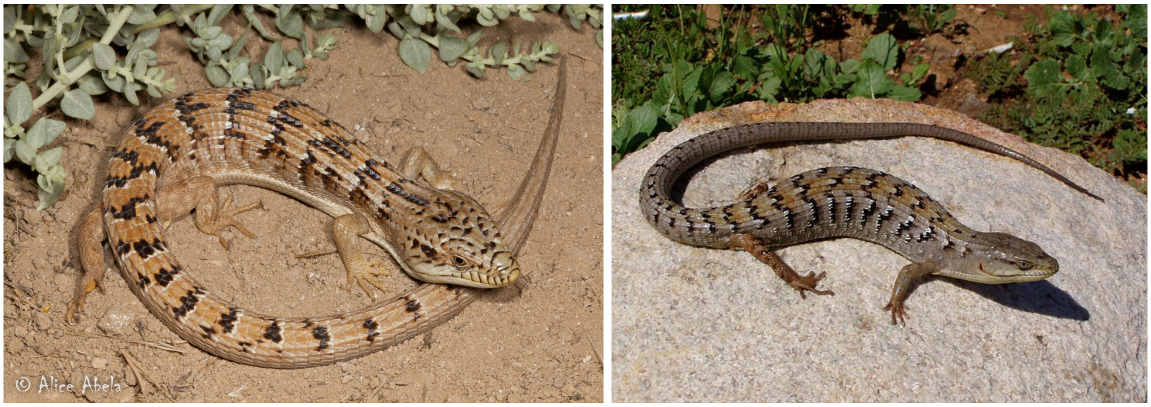


Turkey vulture
Cathartes aura

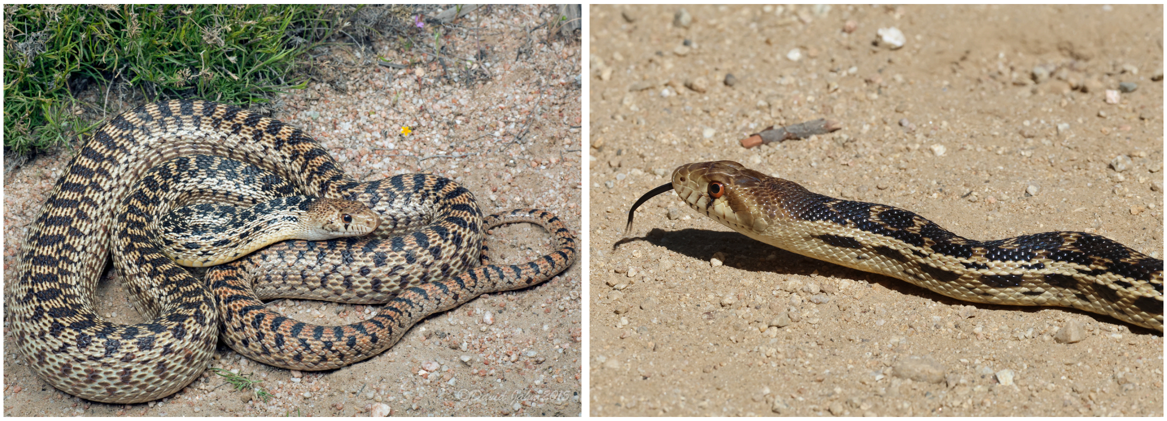
Reptiles



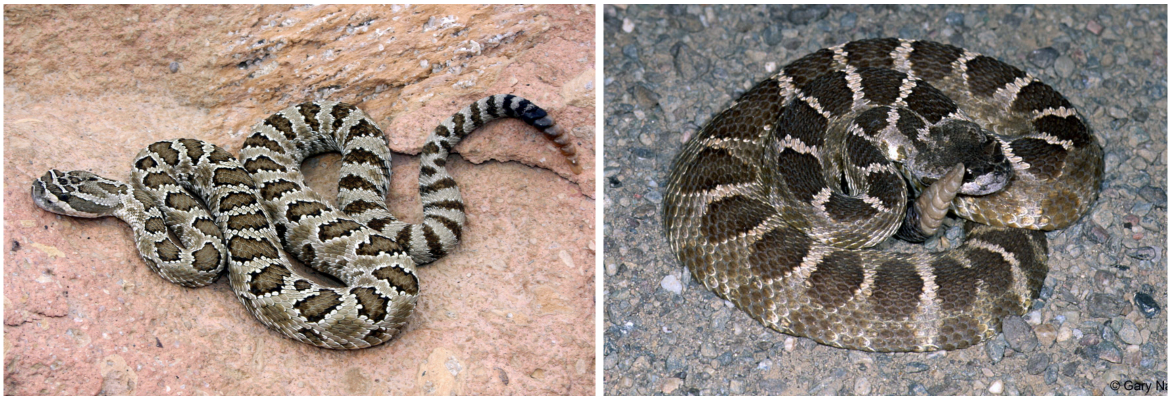
Great Basin fence lizard
Sceloporus occidentalis



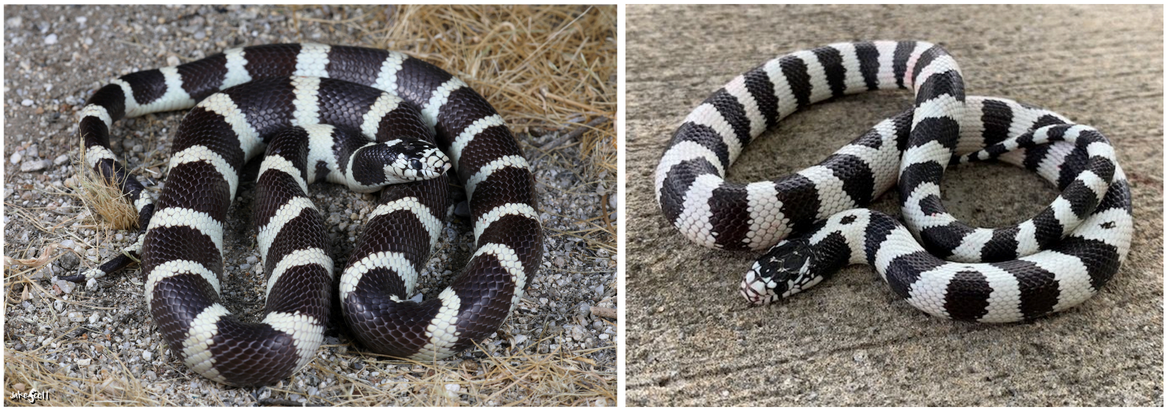
Southern alligator lizard
Elgaria multicarinata



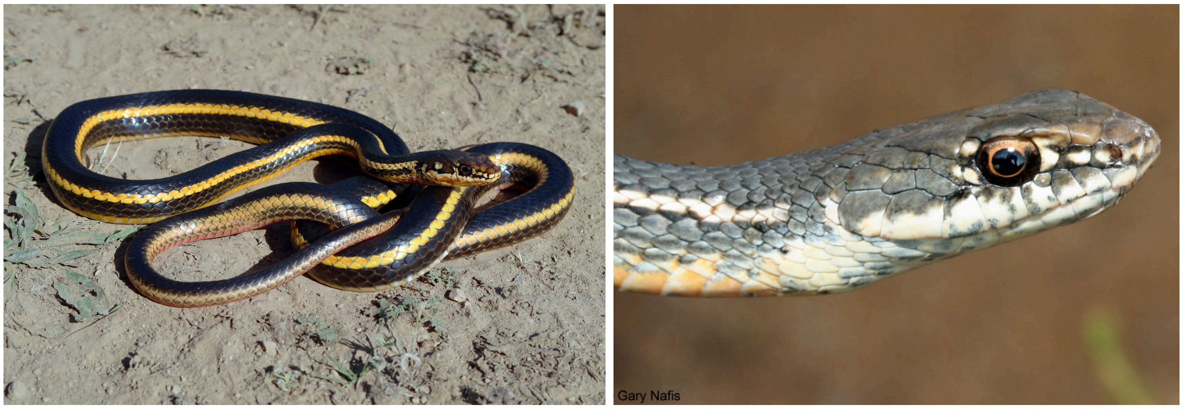
Pacific gopher snake
Pituophis catenifer



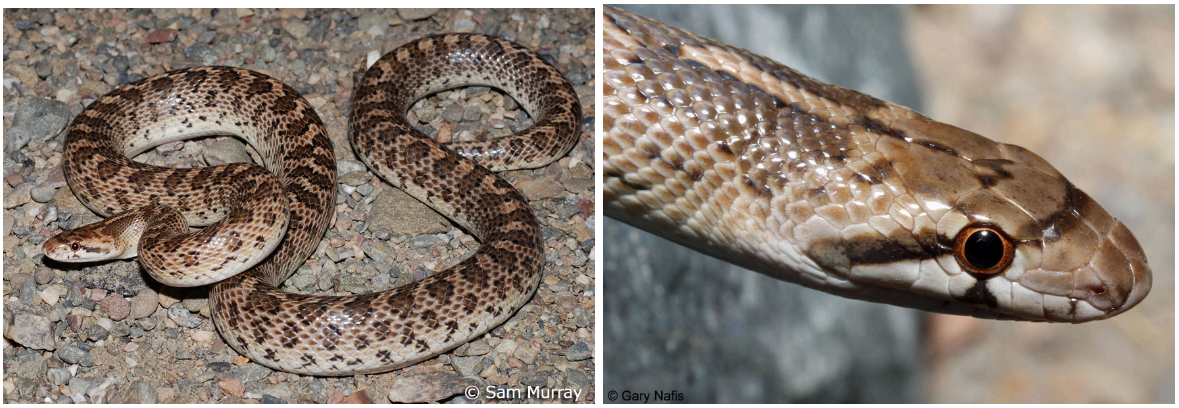
Western rattlesnake
Crotalus oreganus



California kingsnake
Lampropeltis californiae



California Striped Racer
Masticophis lateralis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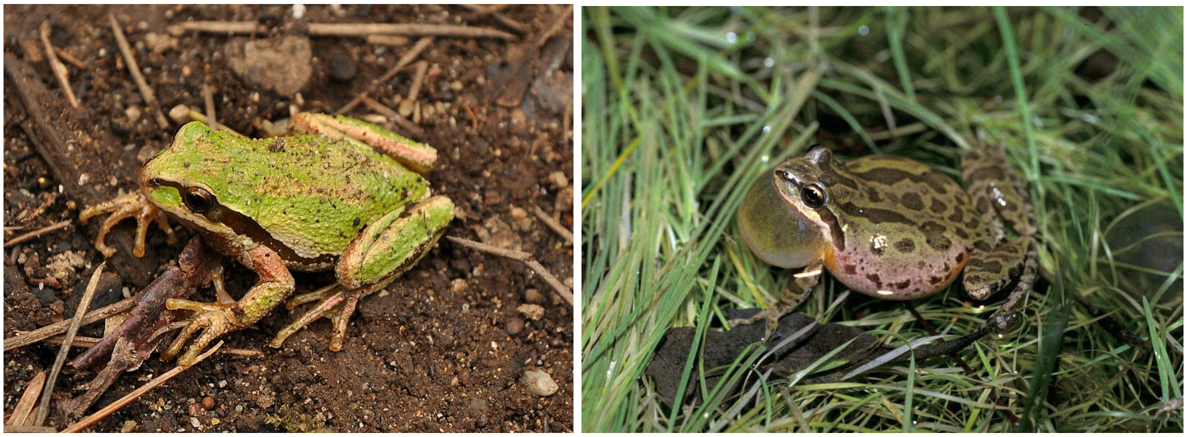
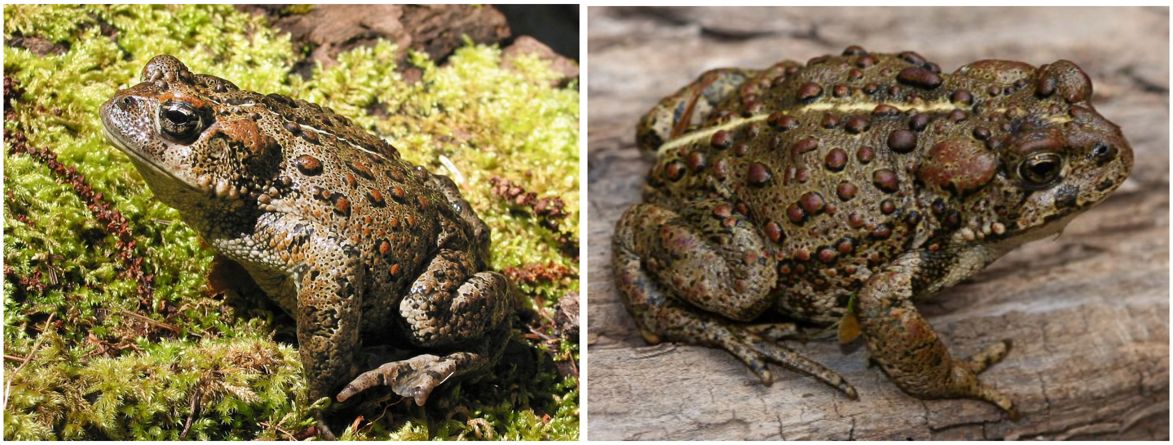
California glossy snake
Arizona elegans occidentalis

Amphibians

Frogs and toads

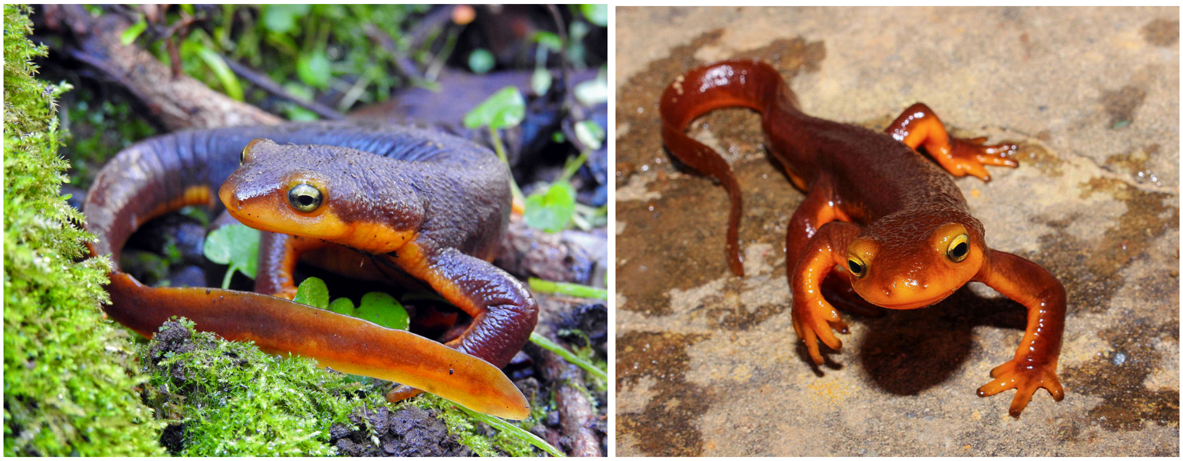


Pacific tree frog
Pseudacris regilla

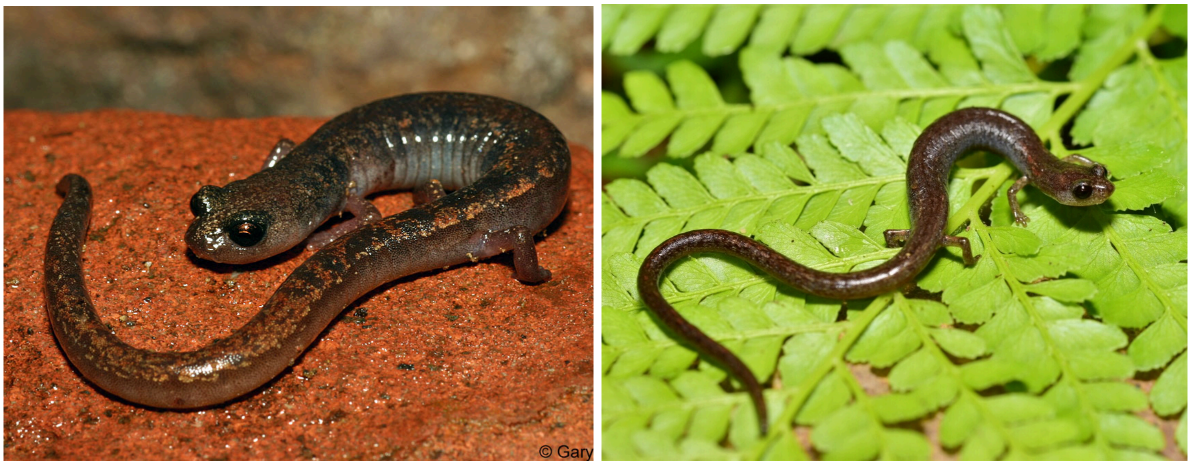


Western toad
Anaxyrus boreas

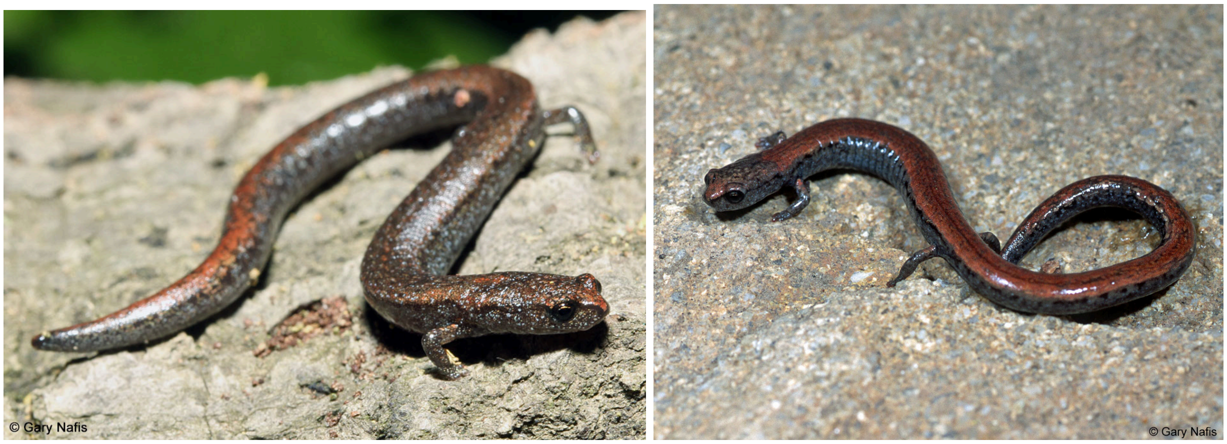
Newts and salamanders



California newt
Taricha torosa
Skin glands produce neurotoxin “tetrodotoxin”, hundreds of times more toxic than cyanide.



Southern California / garden slender salamander
Batrachoseps major
Distinguished from *nigriventris* by pale belly and larger size.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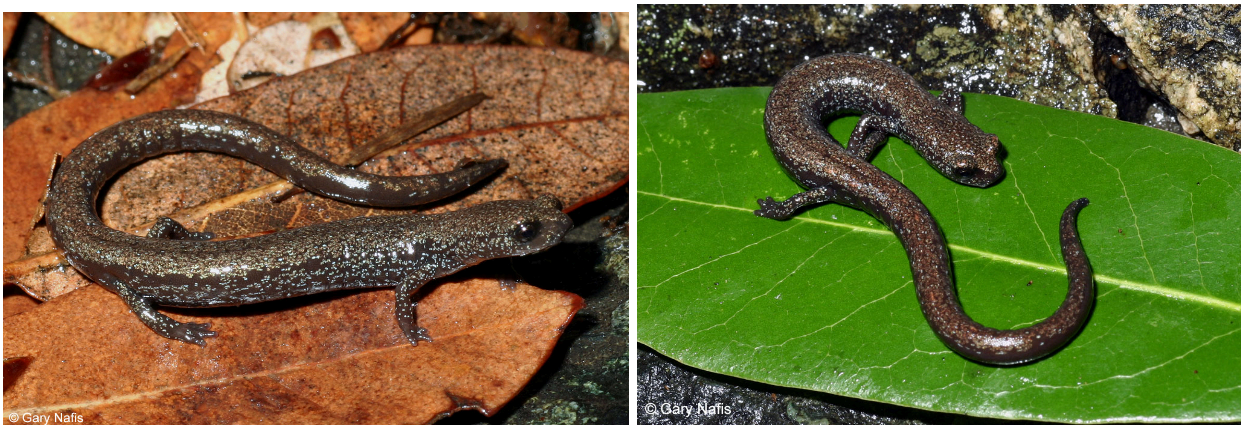
Black-bellied slender salamander
Batrachoseps nigriventris
More fragile than *major.*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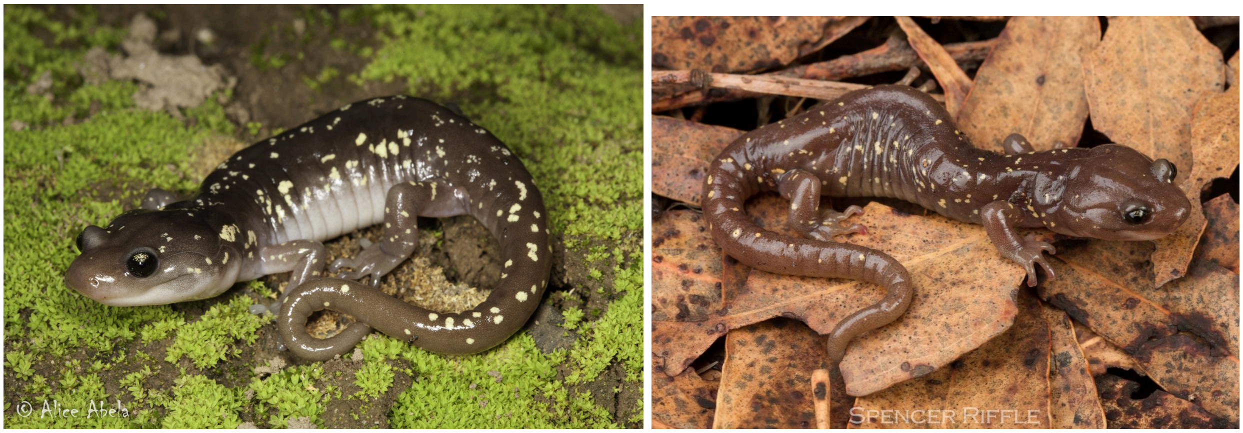
San Gabriel slender salamander
Batrachoseps gabrieli
Like all *Batrachoseps*, hind legs have 4 toes.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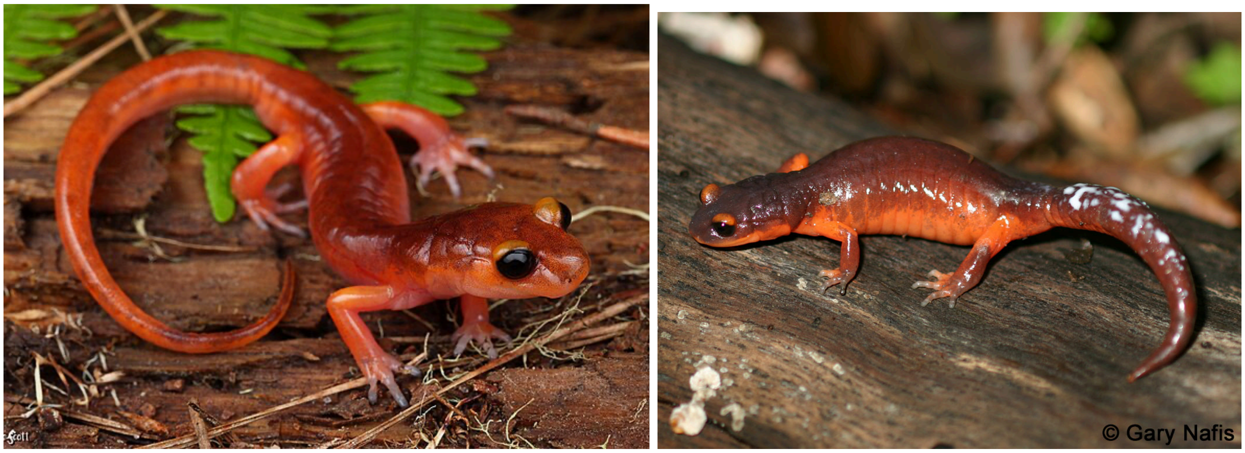
Arboreal salamander
Aneides lugubris
Uses its limbs to glide down from trees.


Scott
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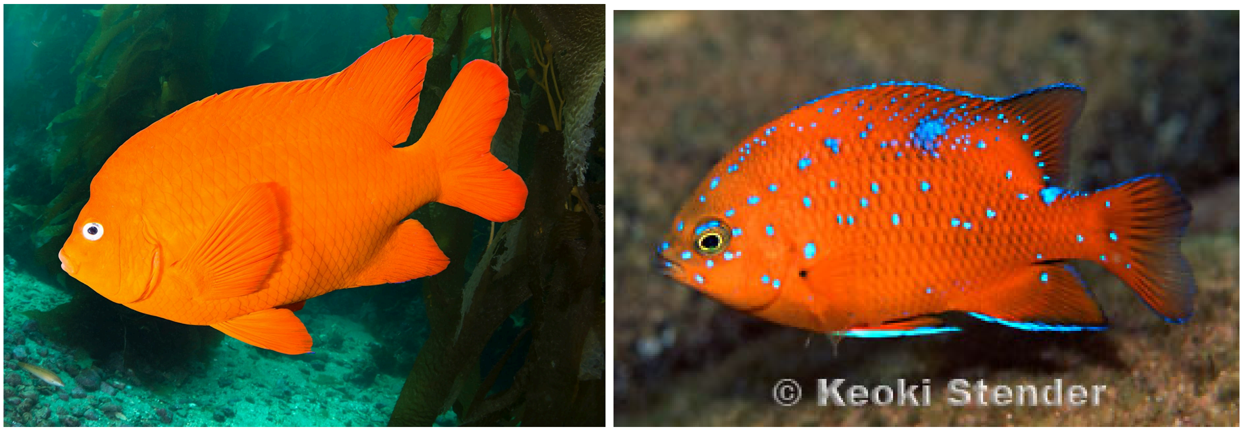
Monterey ensatina
Ensatina eschscholtzii ssp. Eschscholtzi
Capable of detaching tail and secreting poison as a defense mechanism.

Fish

Osteichthyes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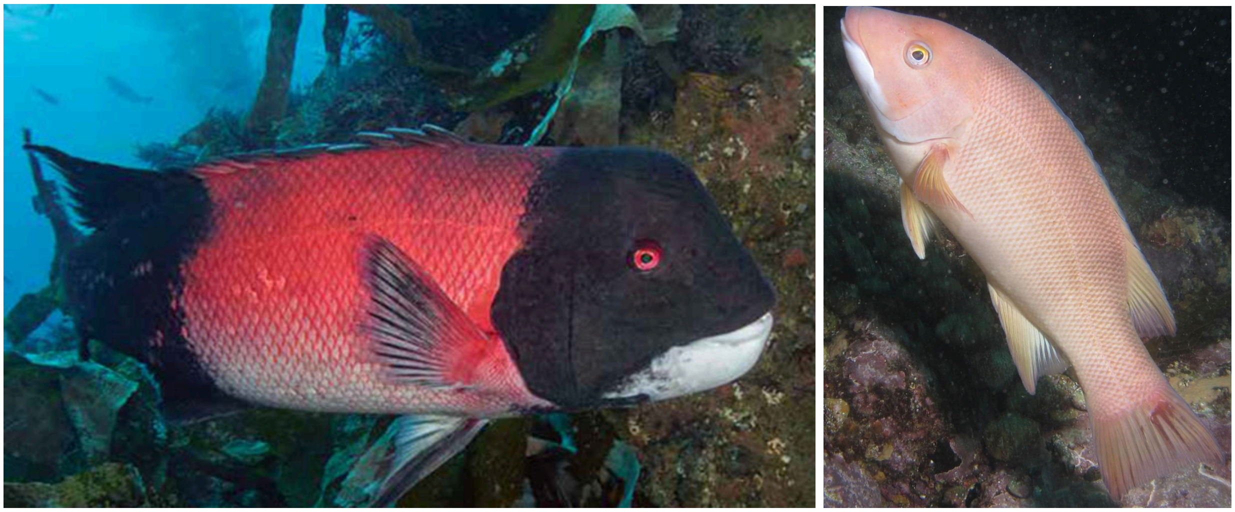
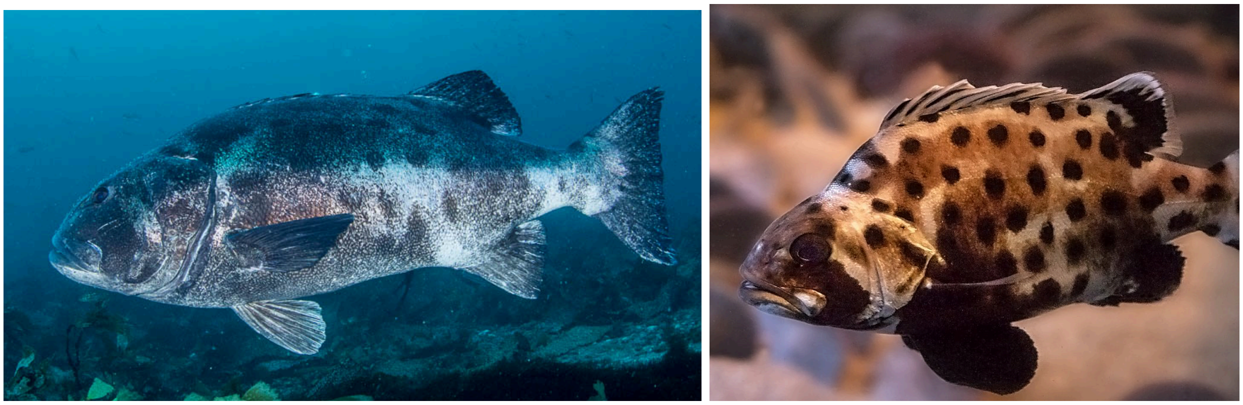
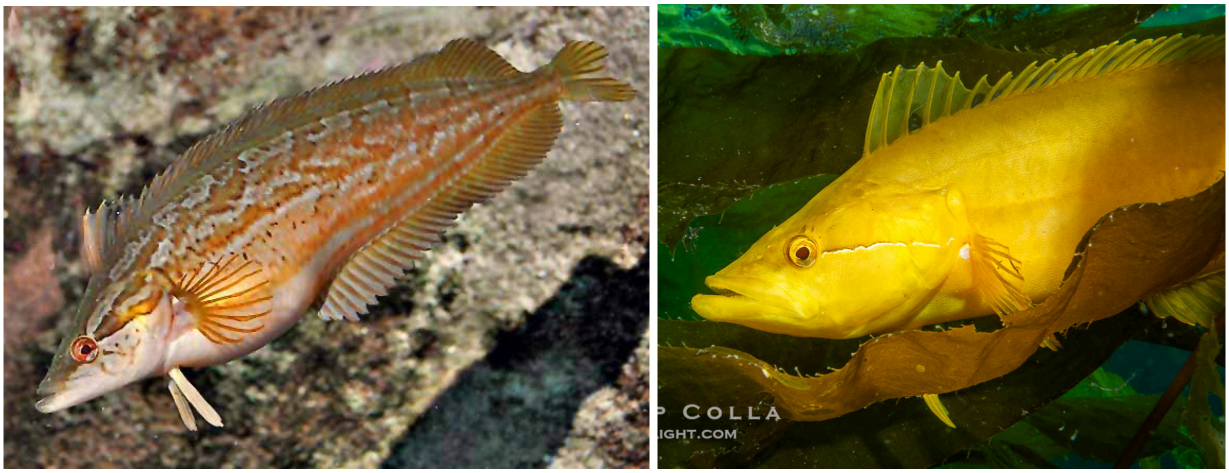
Garibaldi
Hypsypops rubicundus
Adult (left) and juvenile (right); juveniles have iridescent blue markings.



California sheephead
Semicossyphus pulcher
Male (left) and female (right); changes from female to male: protandrous hermaphroditism.

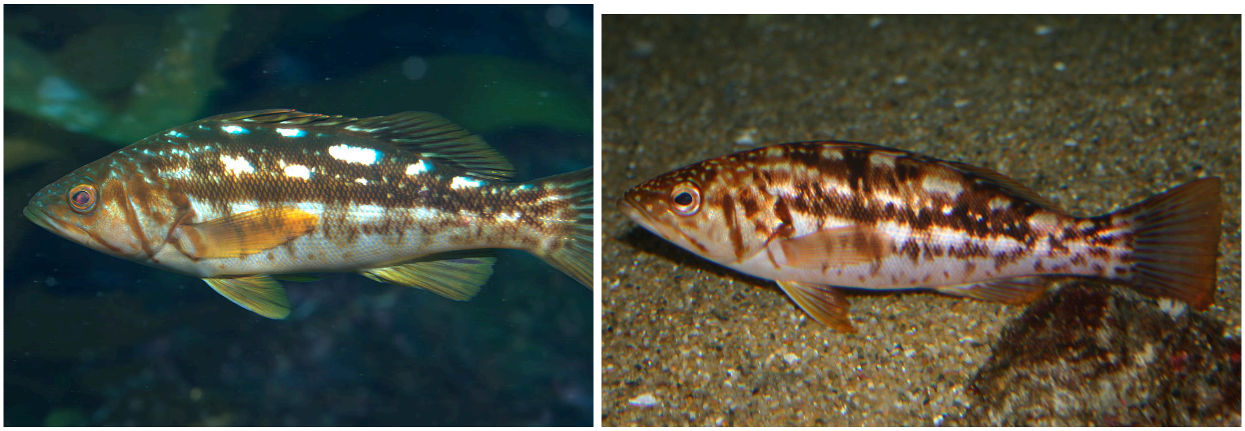


Giant sea bass
Stereolepis gigas
Termed the king of the kelp forest, largest recorded at 563 pounds.

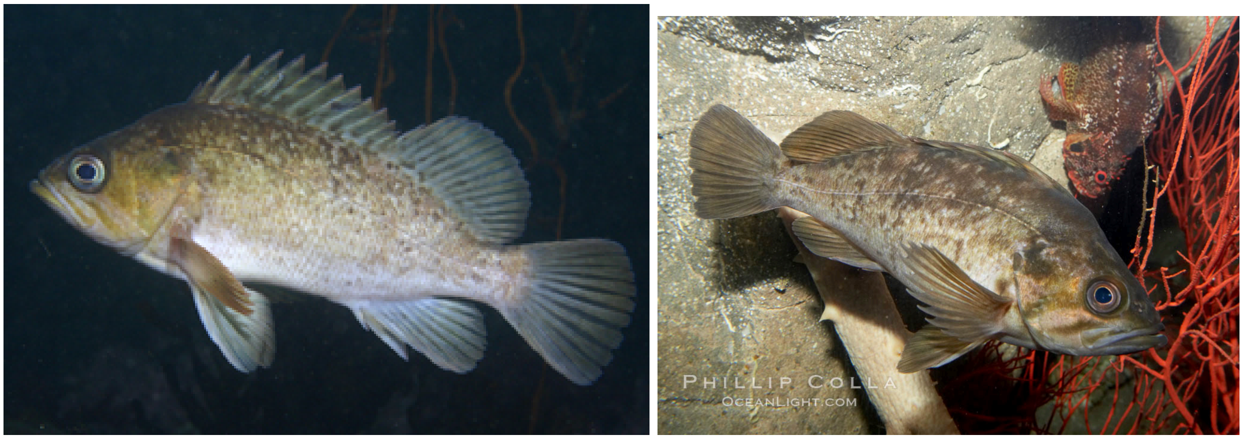


Giant kelpfish

Heterostichus rostratus
Colors include green, yellow, red, and brown.



Kelp bass / calico bass
Paralabrax clathratus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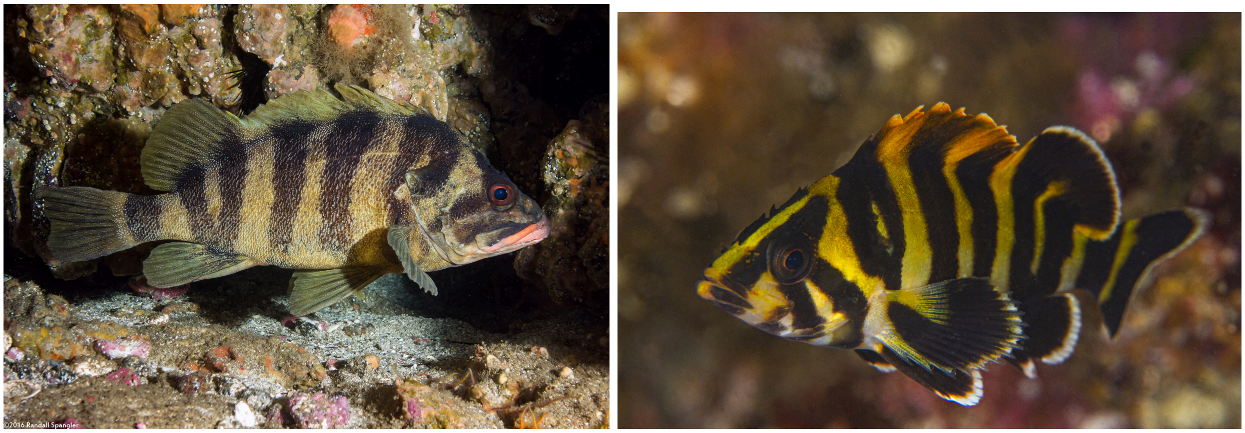
Kelp rockfish
Sebastes atrovirens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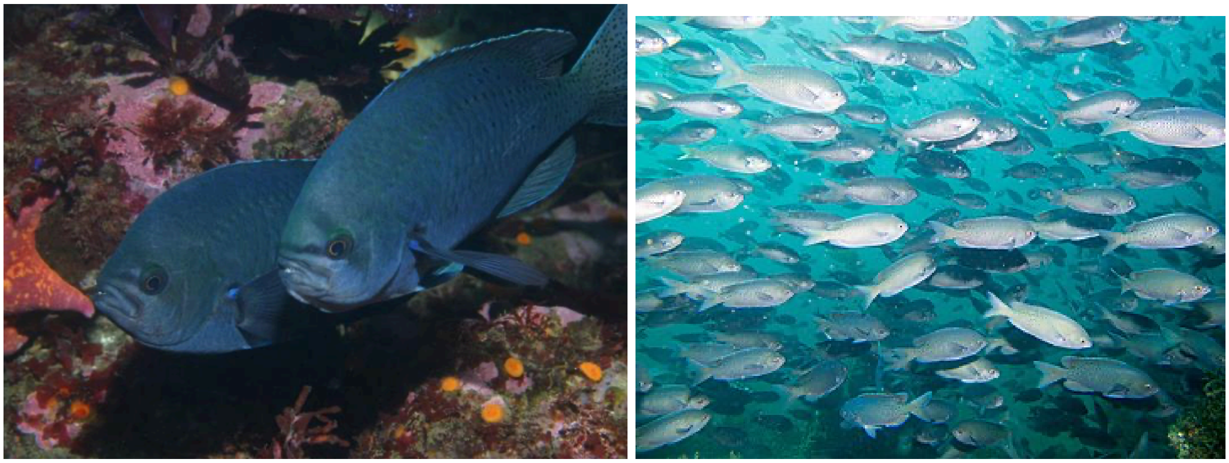
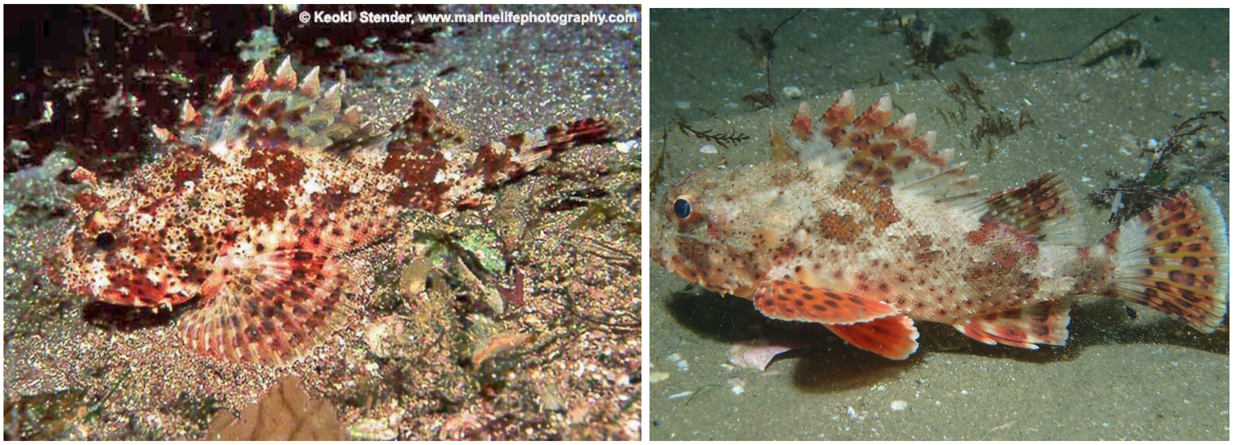
Treefish
Sebastes serriceps



Blacksmith damselfish
Chromis punctipinni



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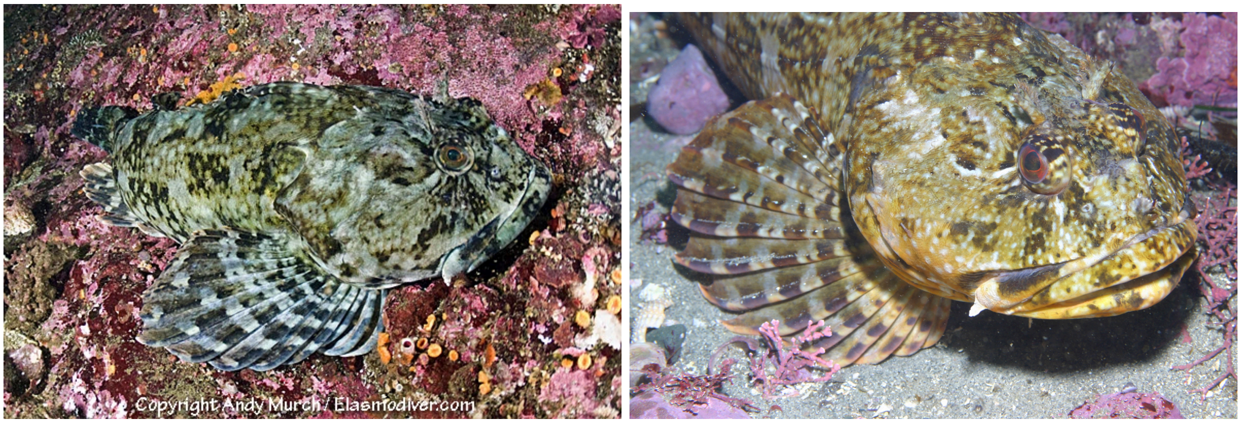
California scorpionfish
Scorpaena guttata



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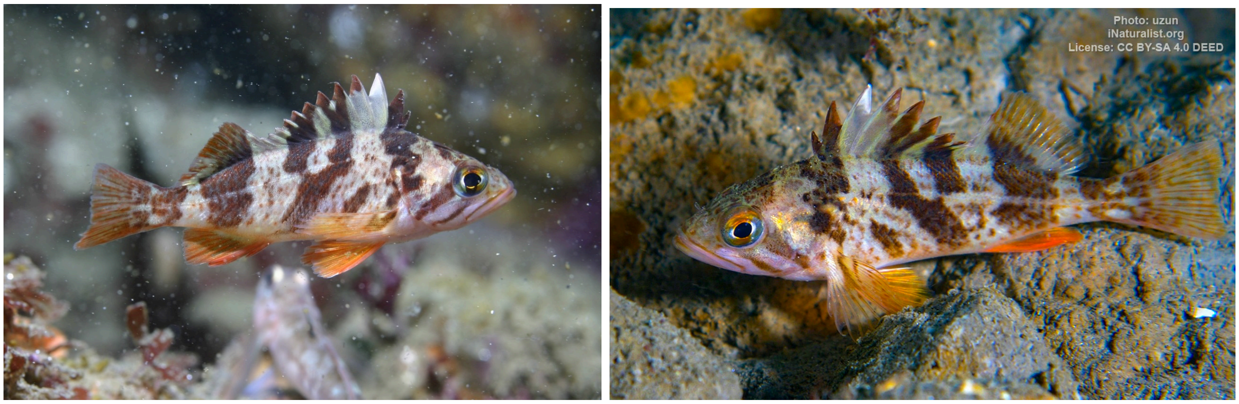
Cabezon
Scorpaenichthys marmoratus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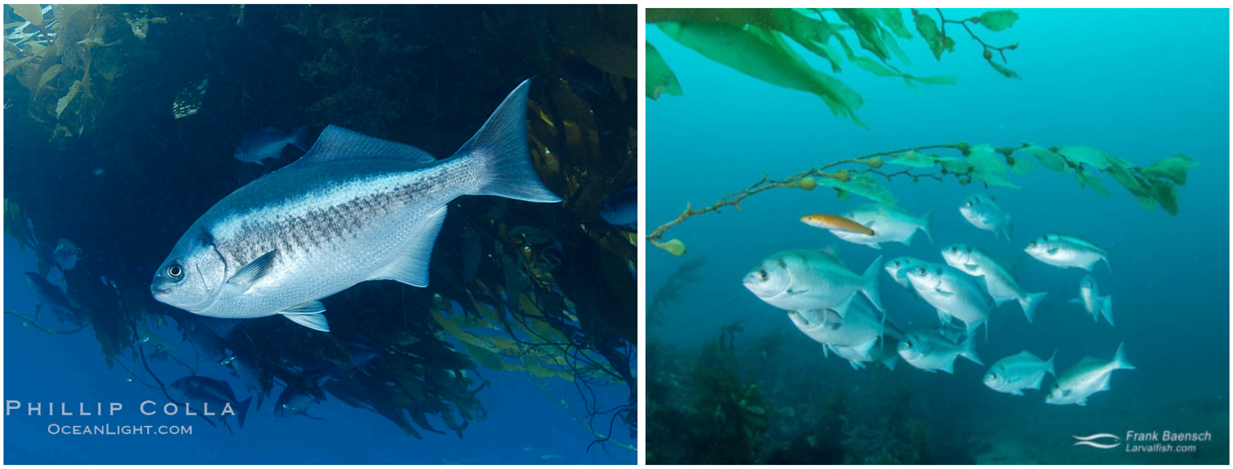
Calico rockfish
Sebastes dallii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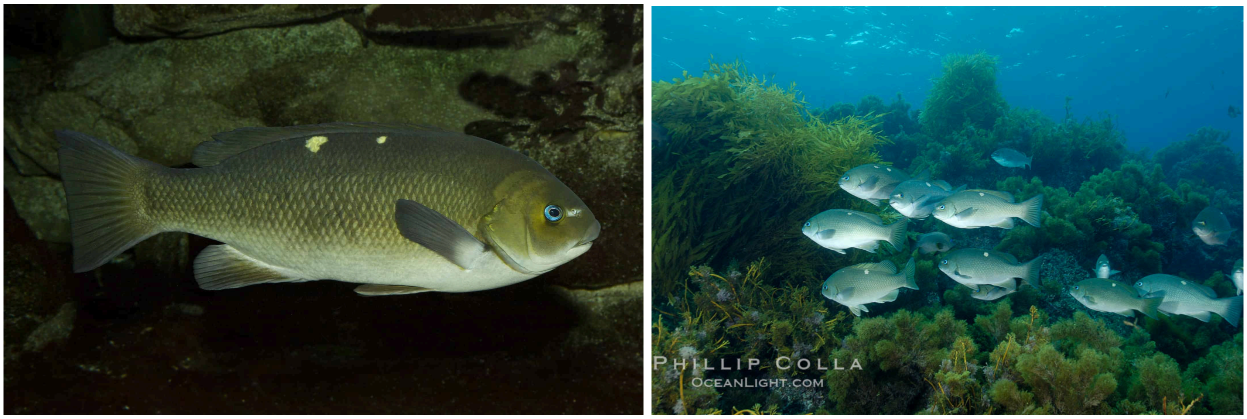
Frank Baensch
Larvalfish.com

Halfmoon
Medialuna californiensis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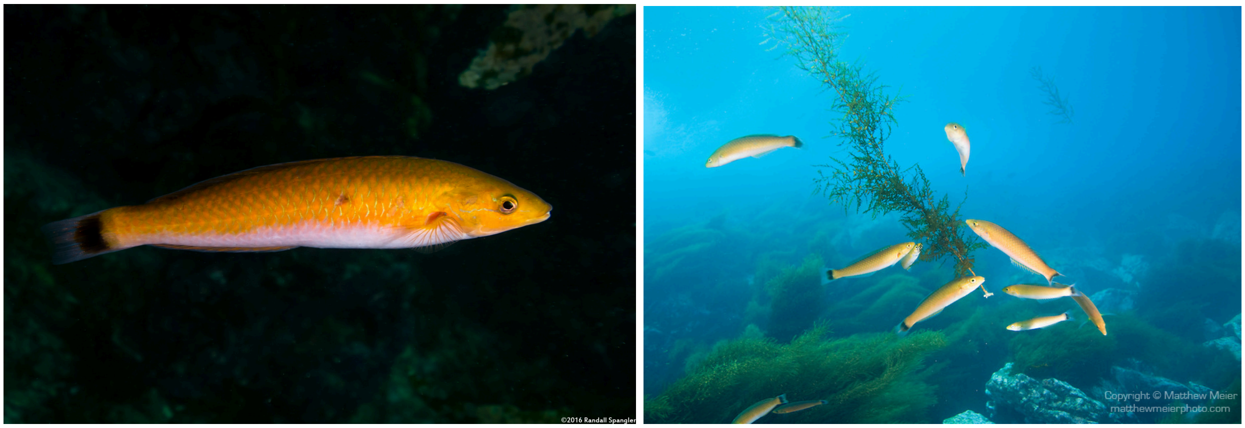
Opaleye
Girella nigricans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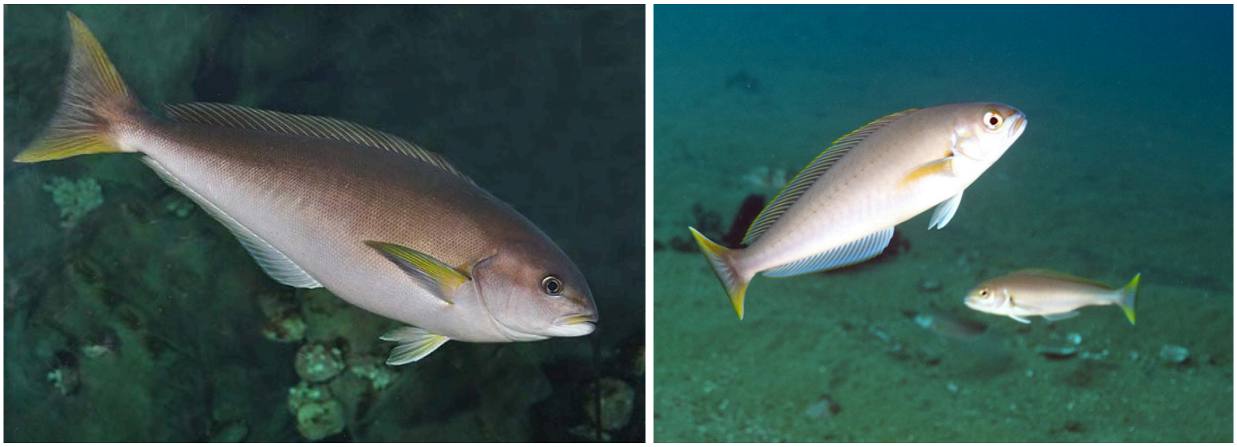
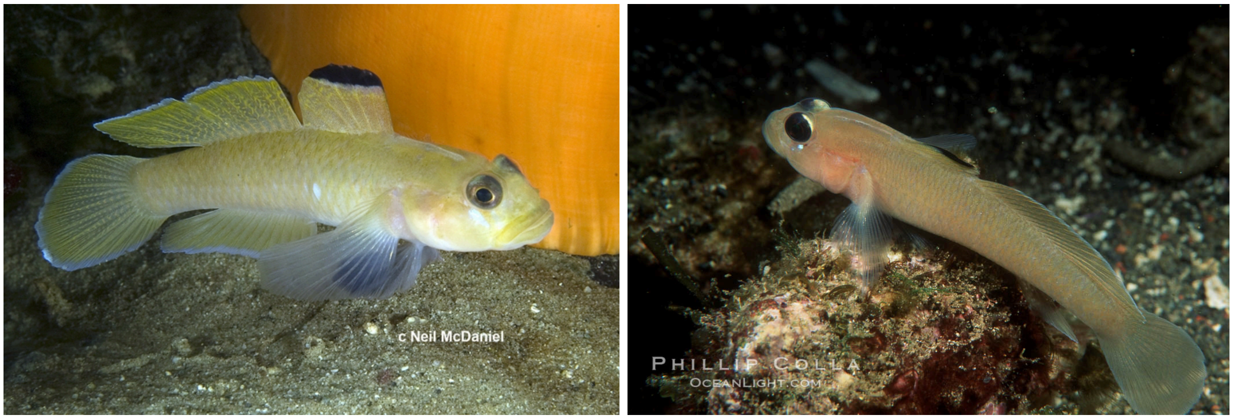
Senorita
Oxyjulis californica



Ocean whitefish
Caulolatilus princeps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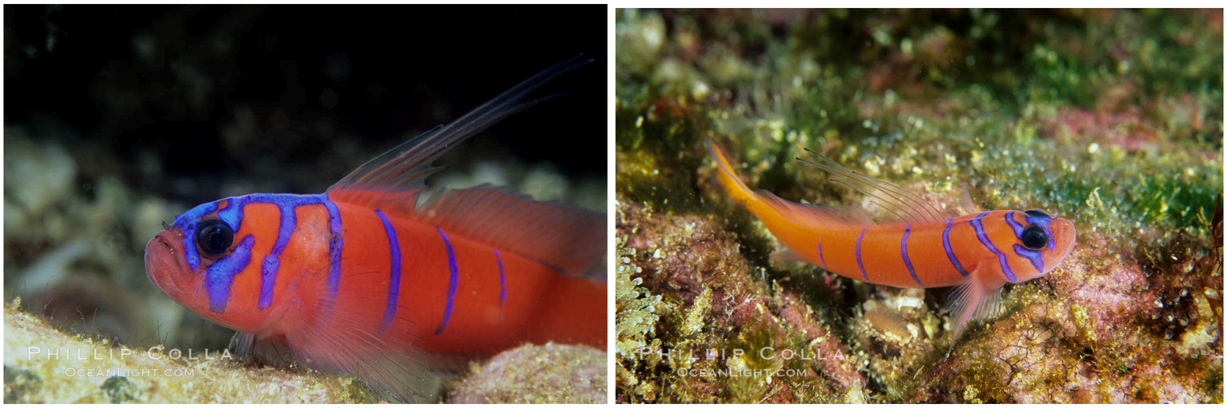
Blackeye goby
Rhinogobiops nicholsii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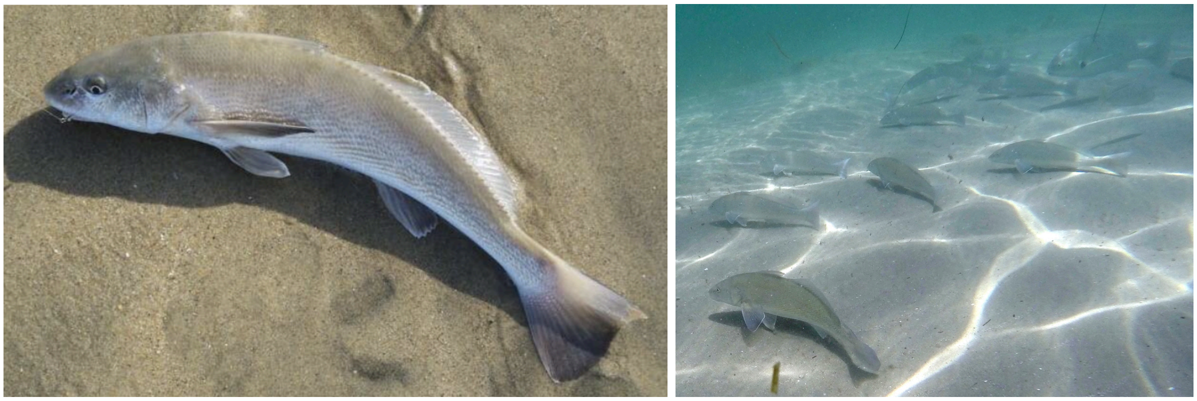
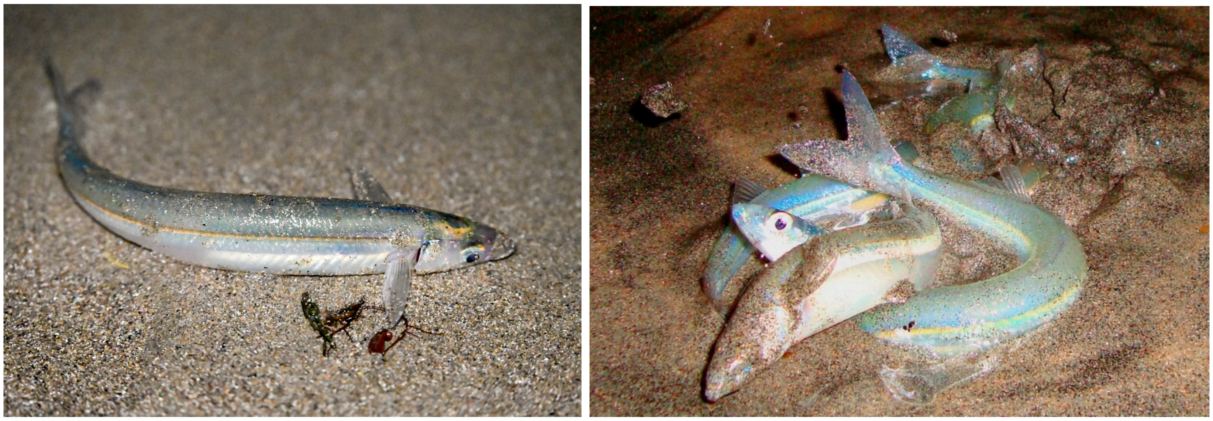
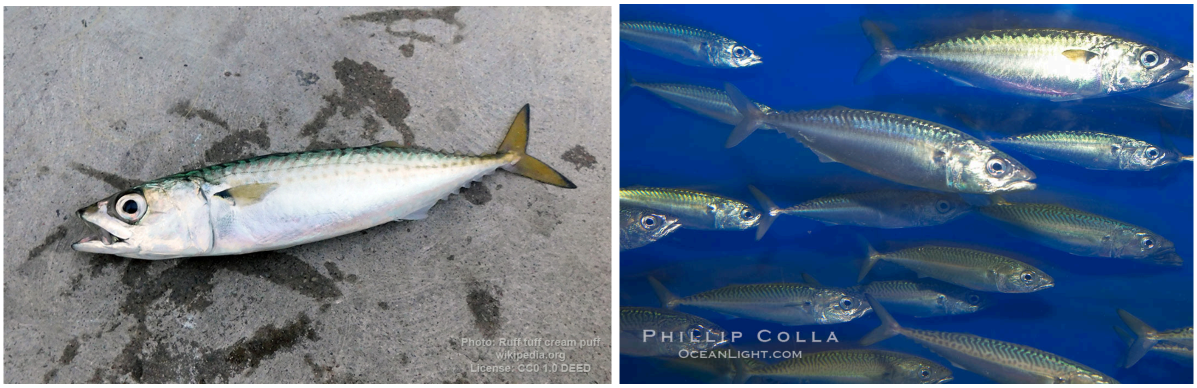
Blue-banded goby
Lythrypnus dalli



California corbina
Menticirrhus undulatus



California grunion
Leuresthes tenuis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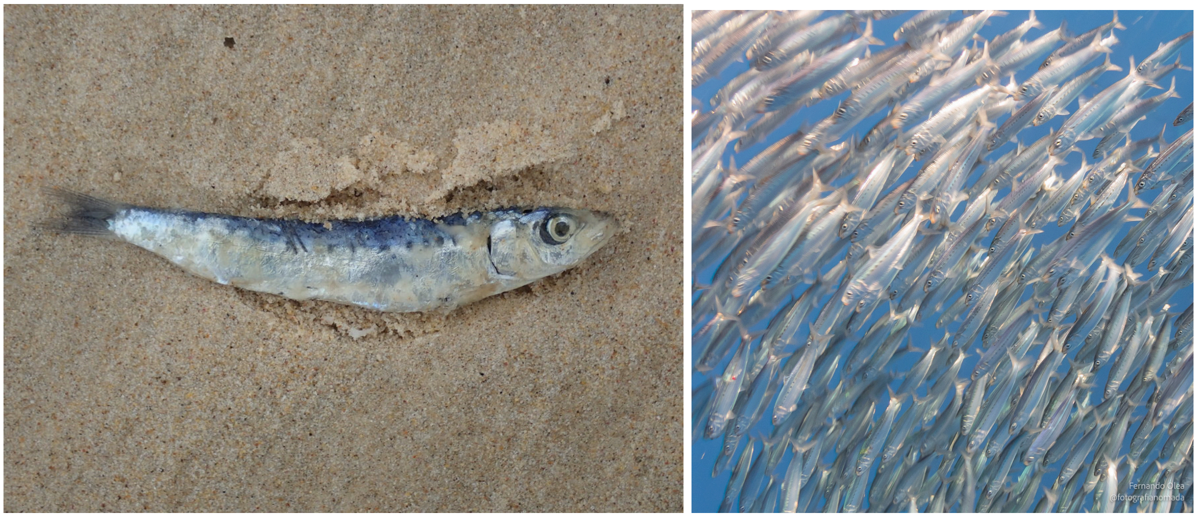
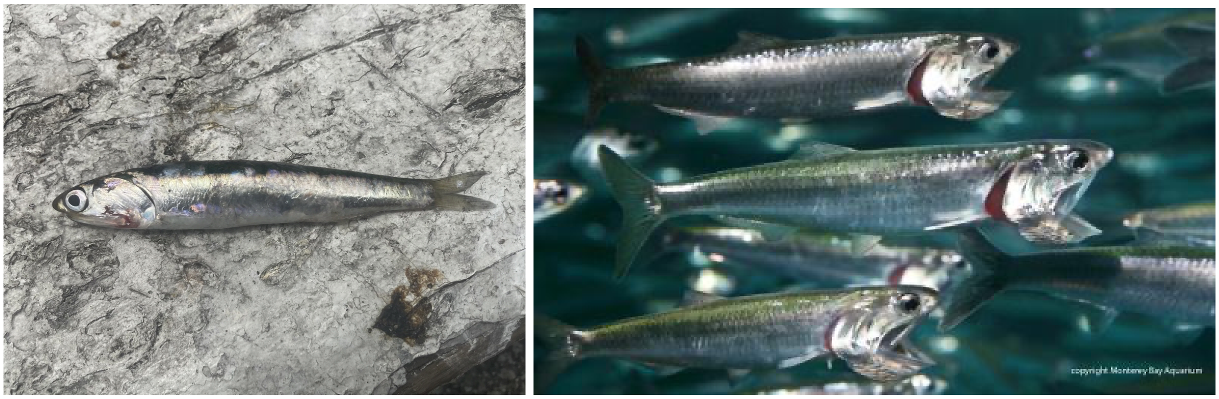
Pacific chub mackerel
Scomber japonicus


Fernando Olea
@fotografianomada

Pacific sardine
Sardinops sagax
Can be distinguished from *Engraulis mordax* by larger size.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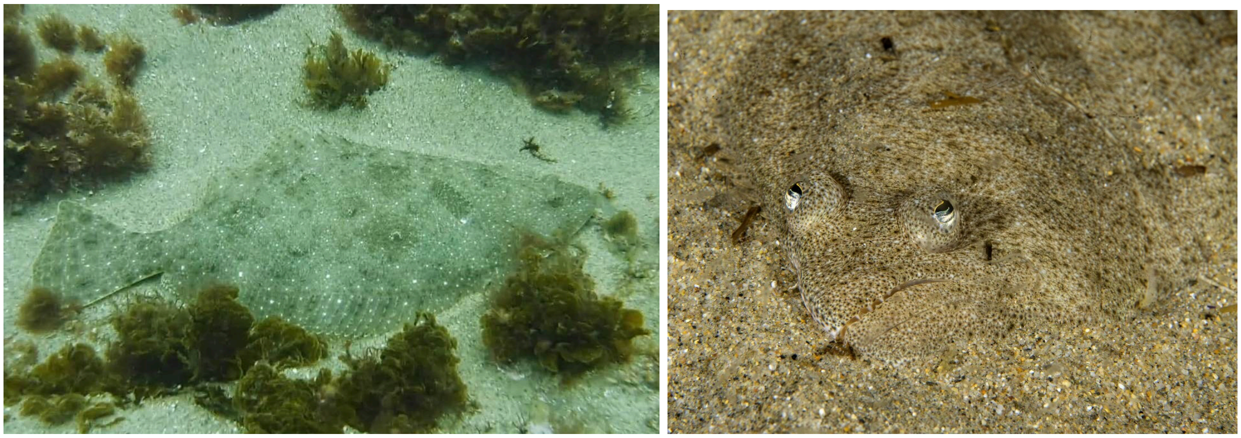
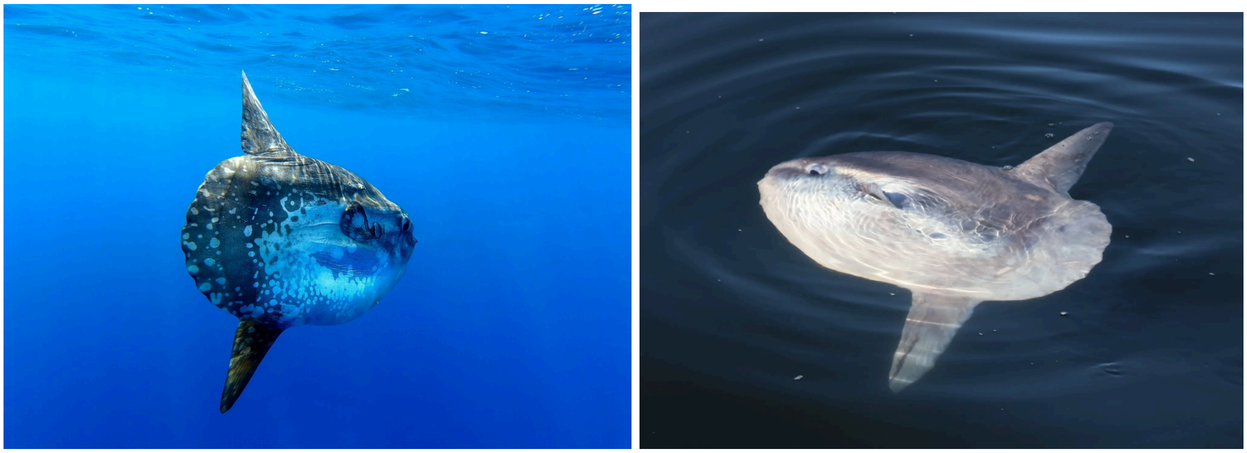
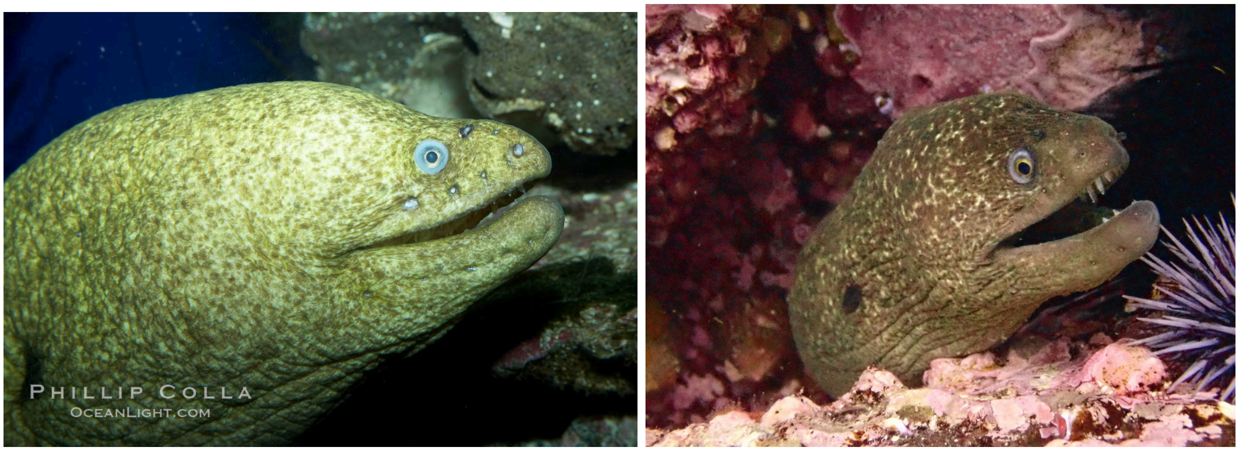
Northern anchovy
Engraulis mordax
Can also be distinguished from *Sardinops sagax* by large mouth.



California halibut
Paralichthys californicus



Ocean sunfish
Mola mola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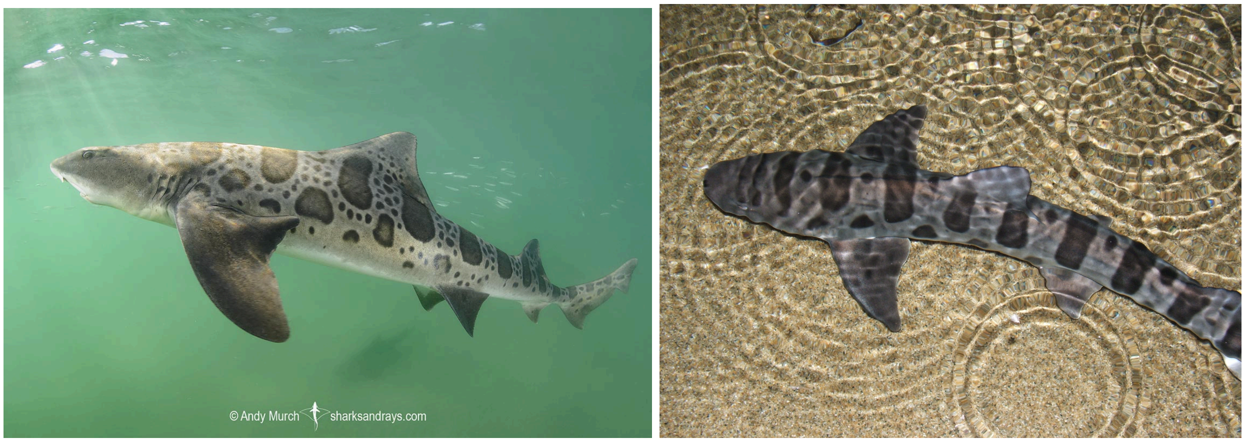
California moray eel
Gymnothorax mordax

Sharks and rays

Chondrichthyans



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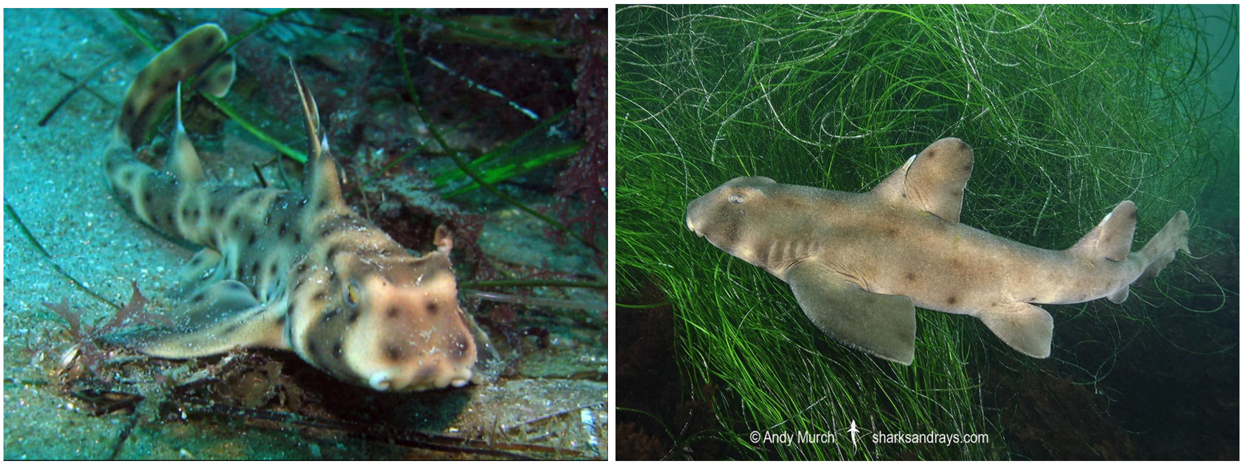
Leopard shark
Triakis semifasciata



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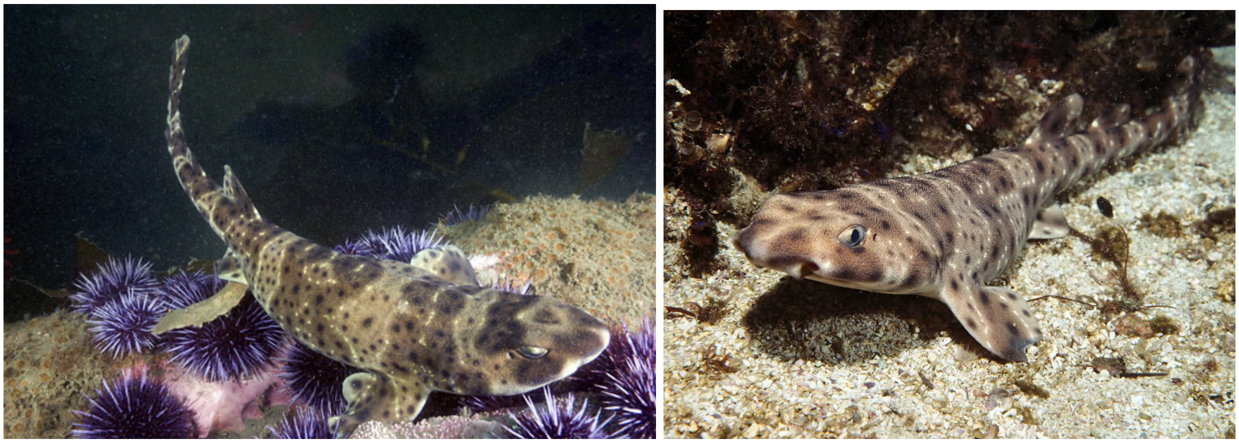
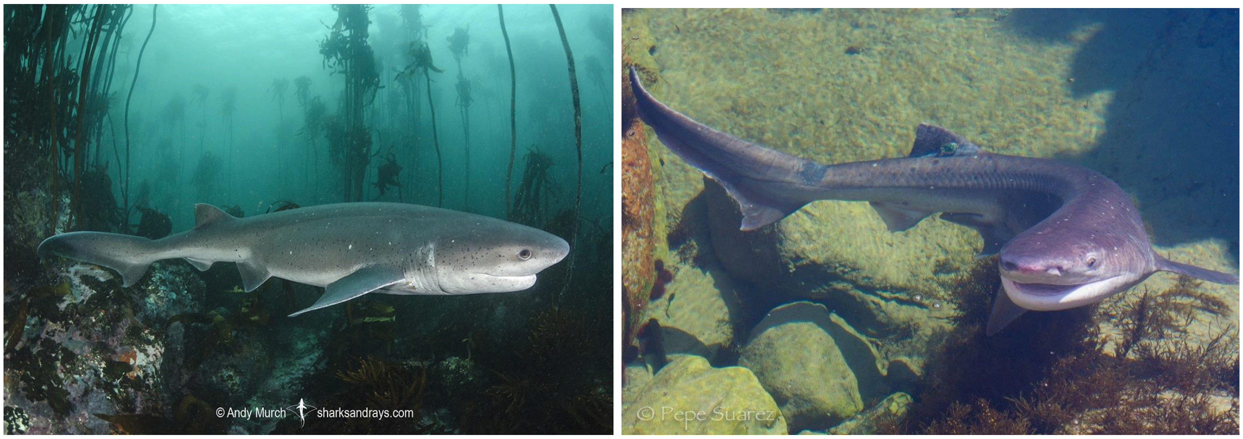
Horn shark
Heterodontus francisci



Swell shark

Cephaloscyllium ventriosum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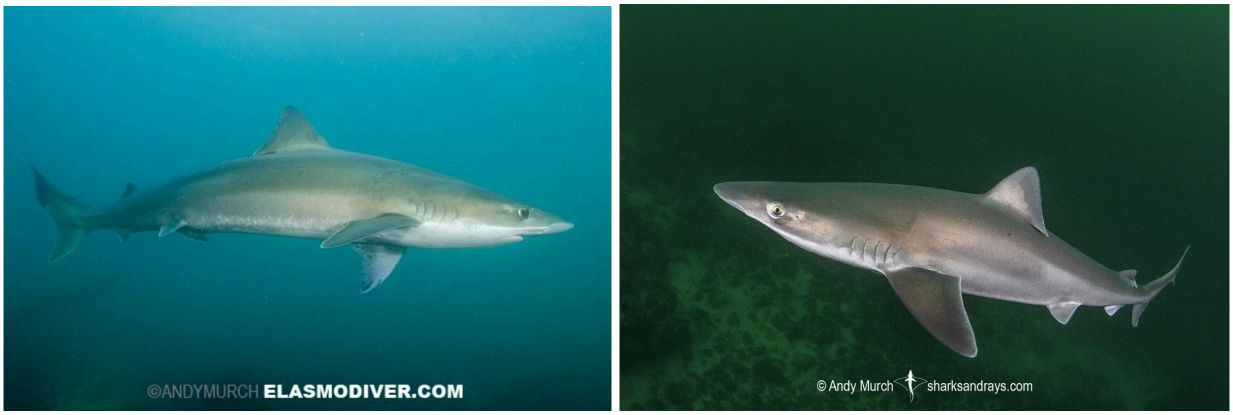
© Pepe Suarez

Broadnose sevengill shark
Notorynchus cepedianus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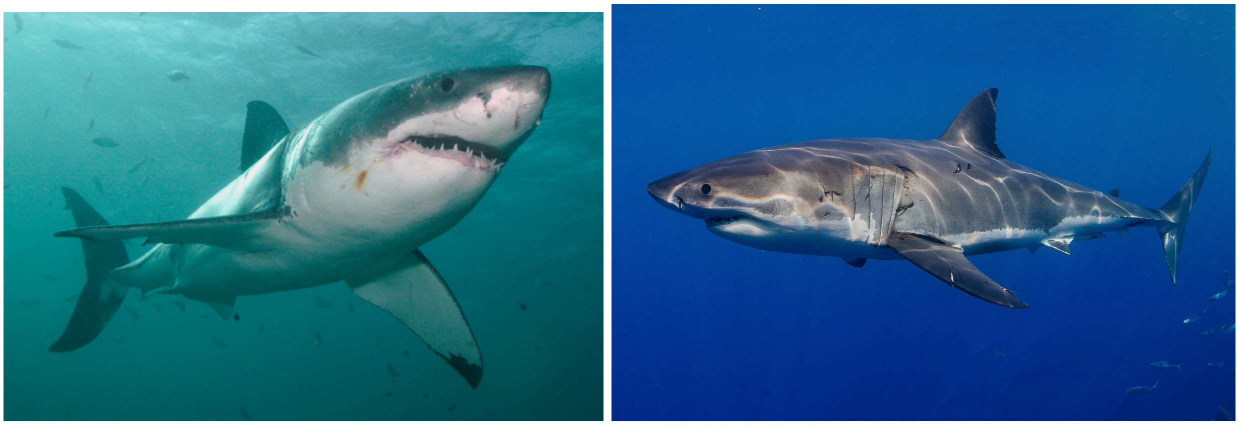
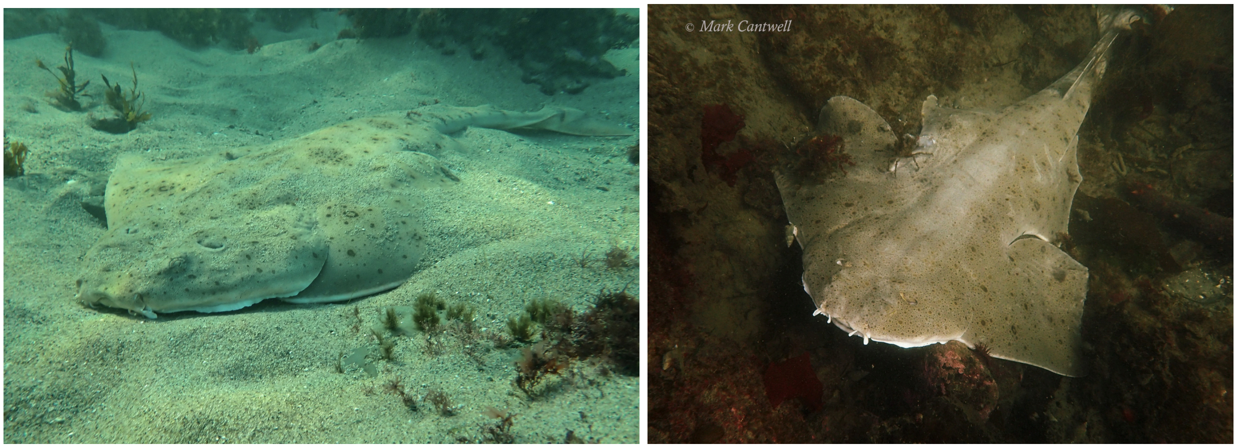
Soupfin / school shark
Galeorhinus galeus



Great white shark
Carcharodon carcharias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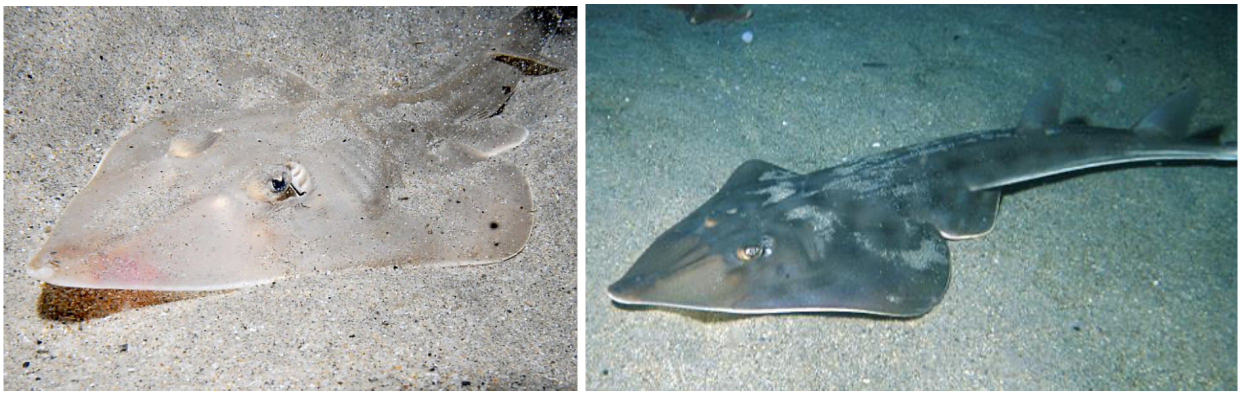
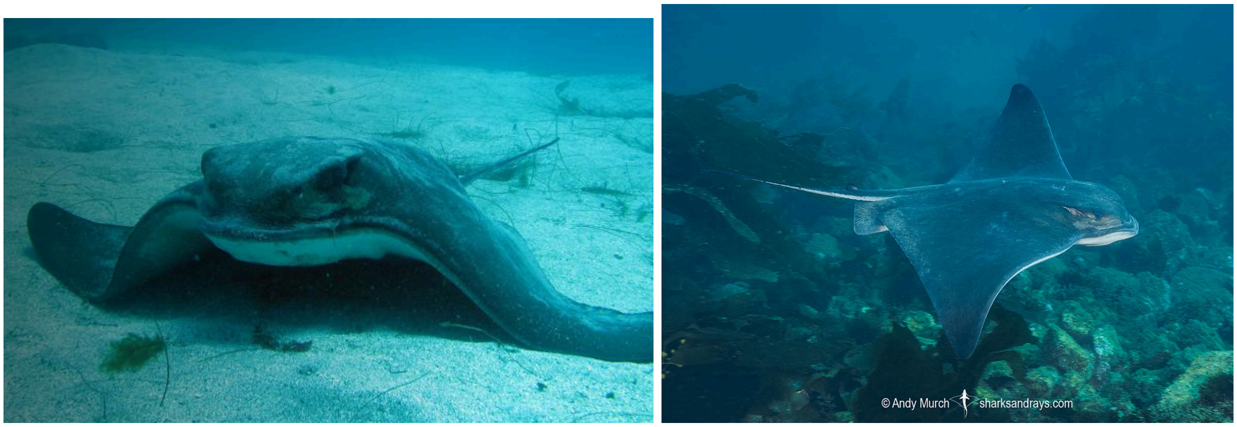
Pacific angelshark
Squatina californica



Shovelnose guitarfish
Rhinobatos productus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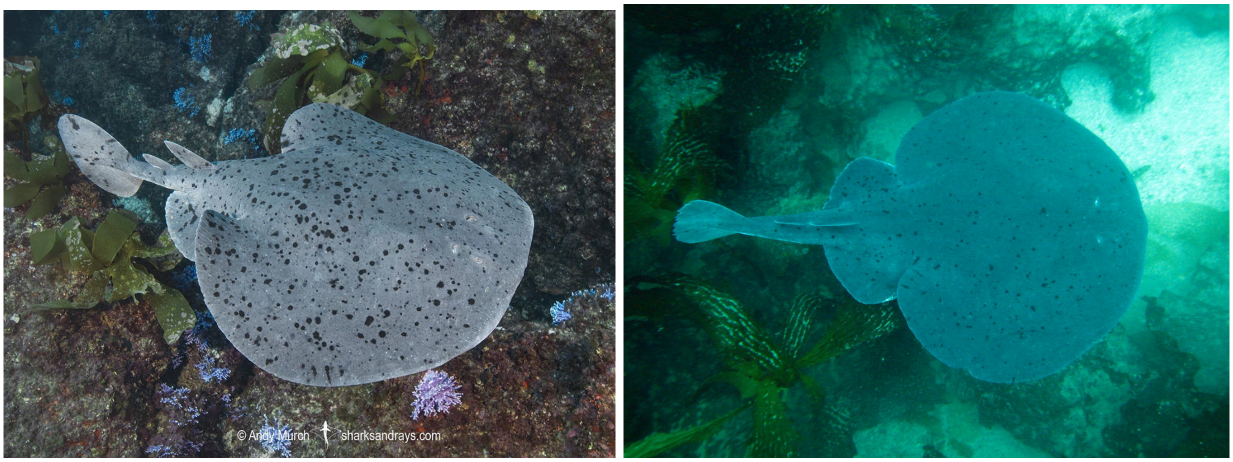
Bat ray
Myliobatis californica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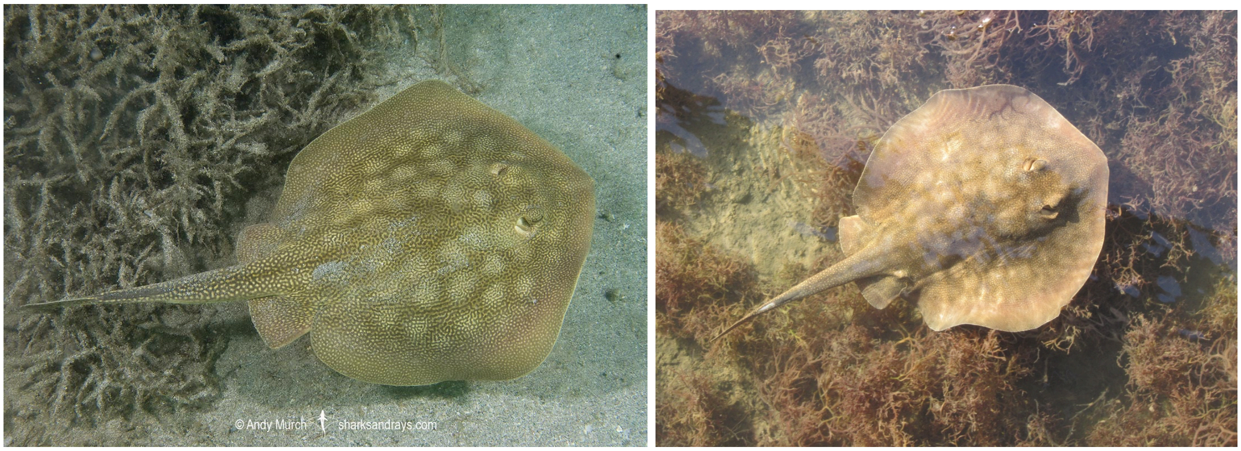
Pacific electric ray
Torpedo californica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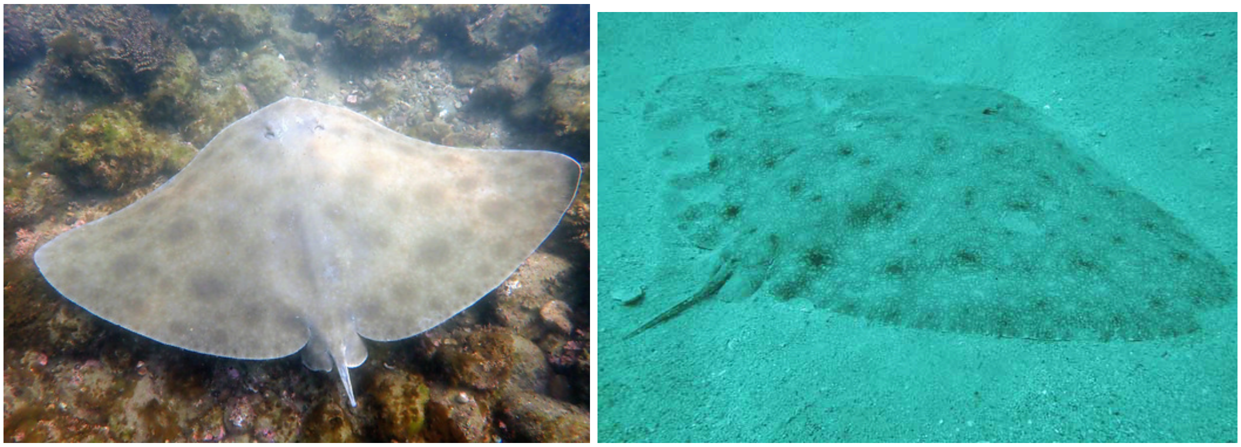
Haller's round ray
Urobatis halleri

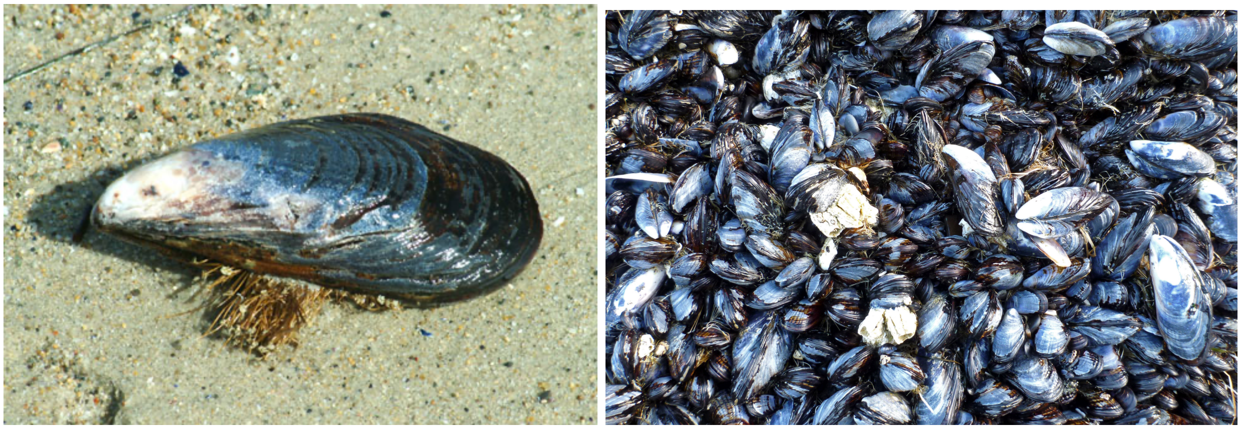


California butterfly ray
Gymnura marmorata

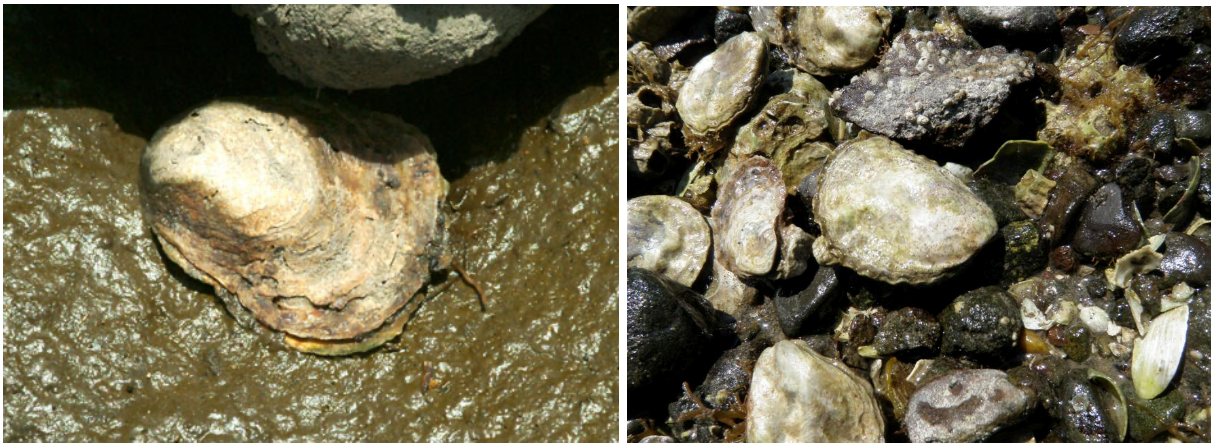
Invertebrates

Molluscs

Mussels and oysters

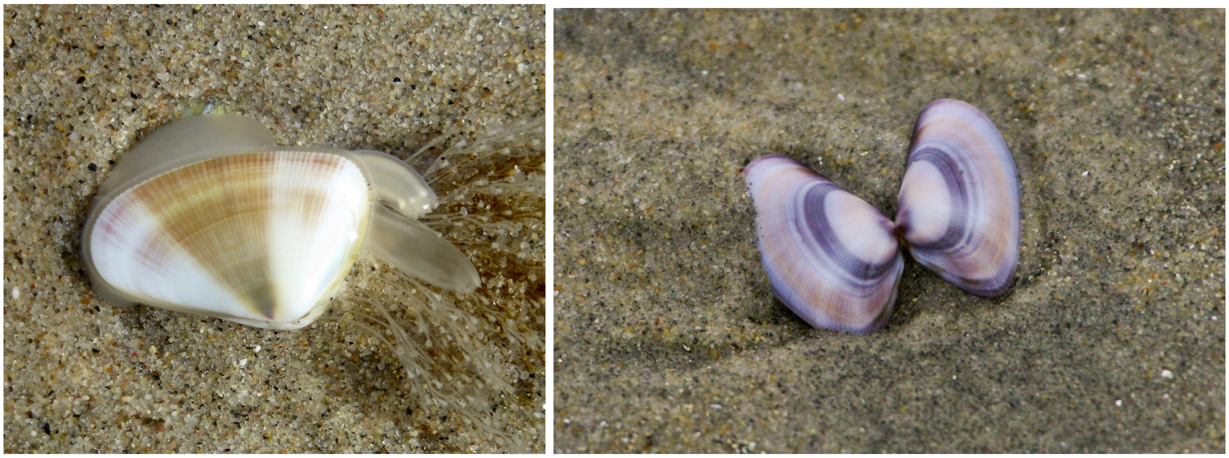


California mussels
Mytilus californianus

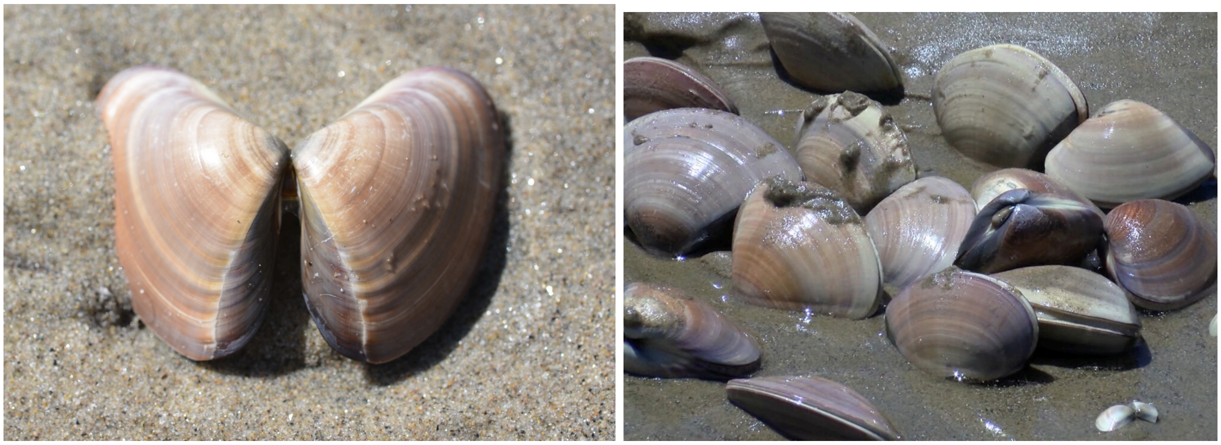


Olympia oyster
Ostrea lurida

Clams

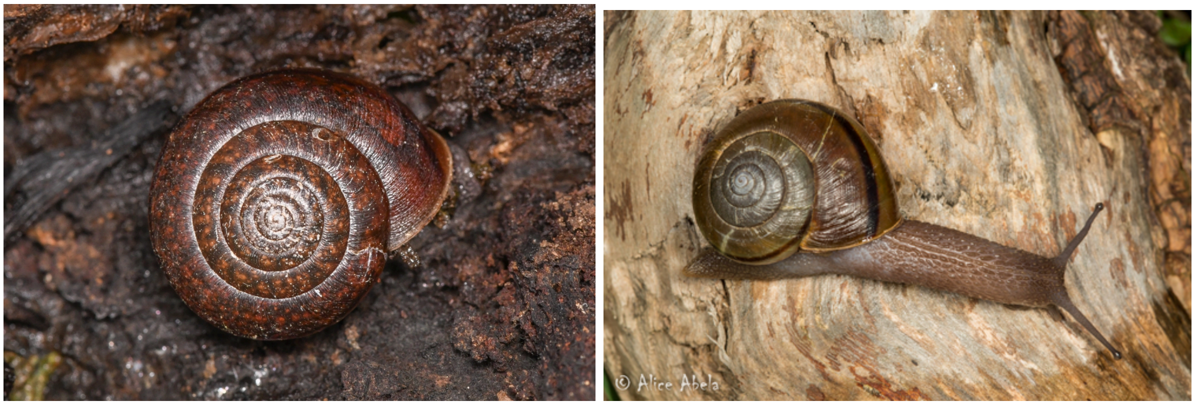


Gould beanclam
Donax gouldii



Pismo clam
Tivela stultorum

Snails and slugs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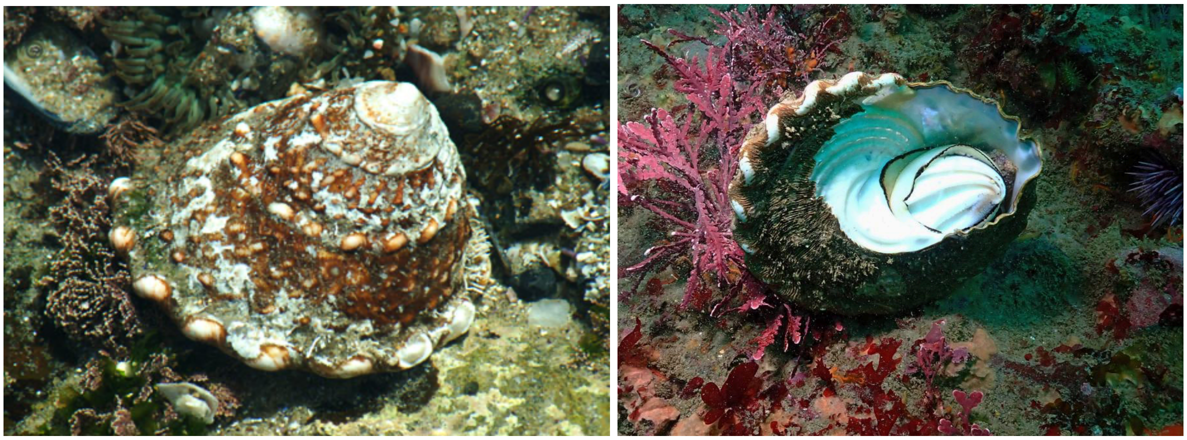
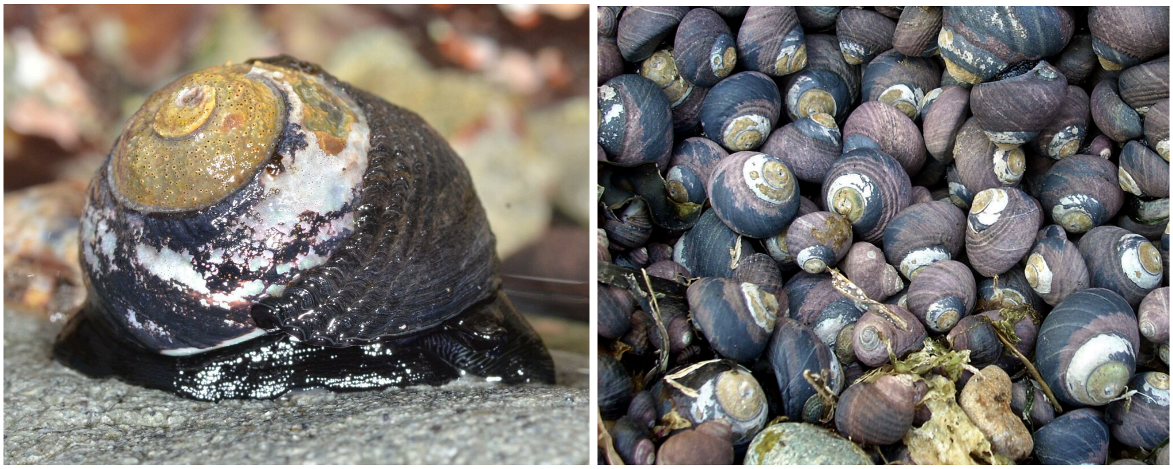
Trask shoulderband snail
Helminthoglypta traskii

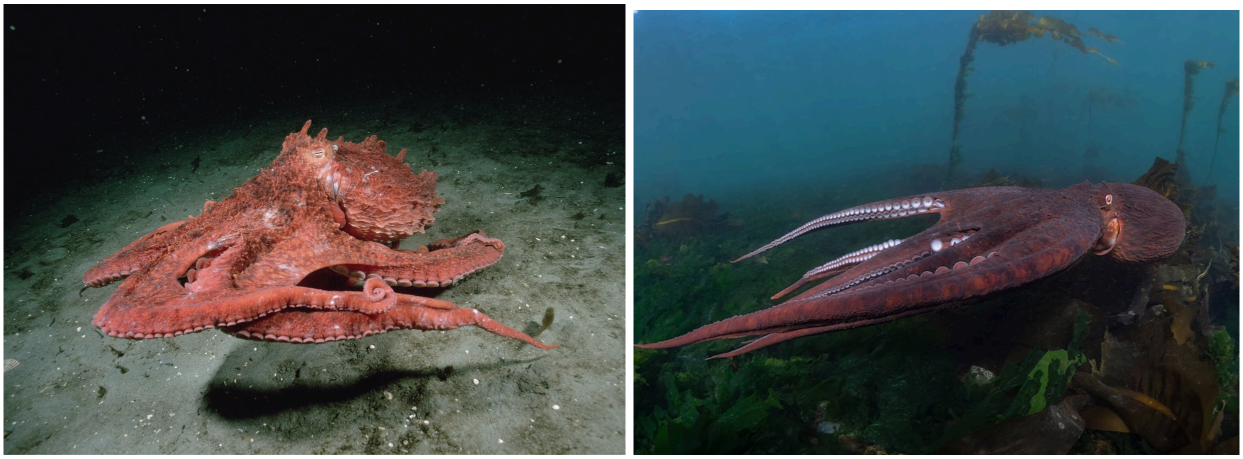


Wavy turban snail
Megastraea undosa



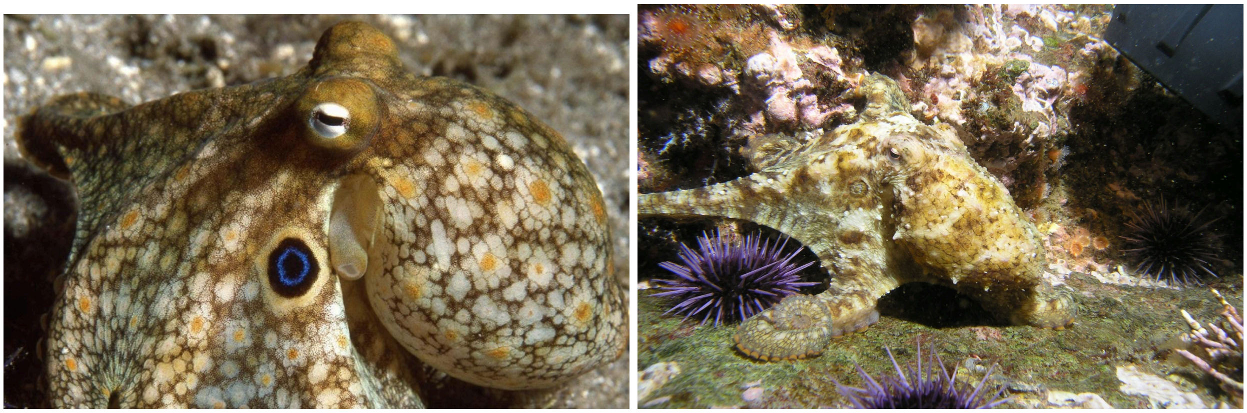
Black tegula
Tegula funebralis

Octopi and squid

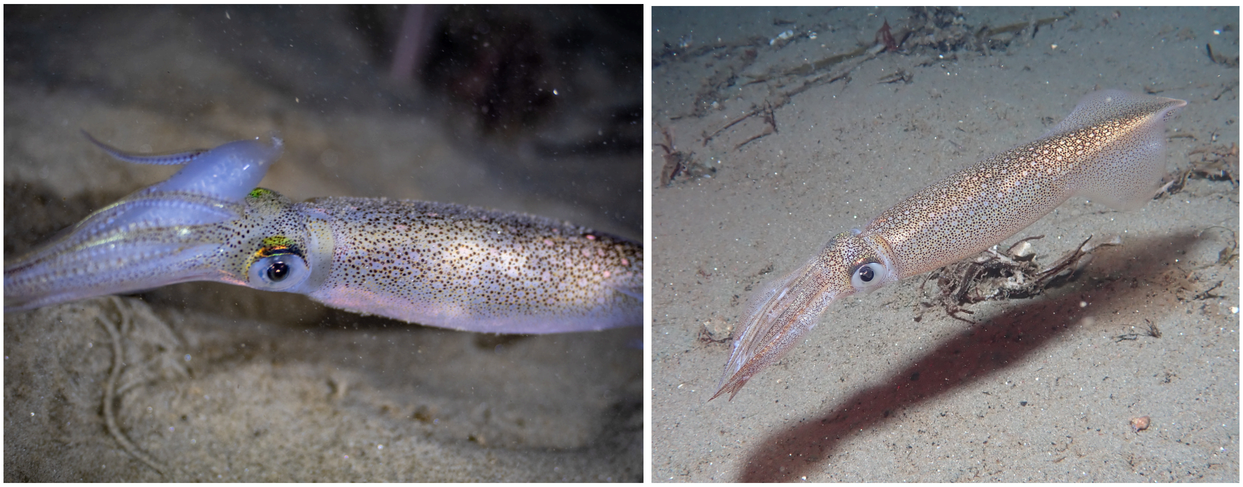


Giant Pacific octopus

Enteroctopus dofleini



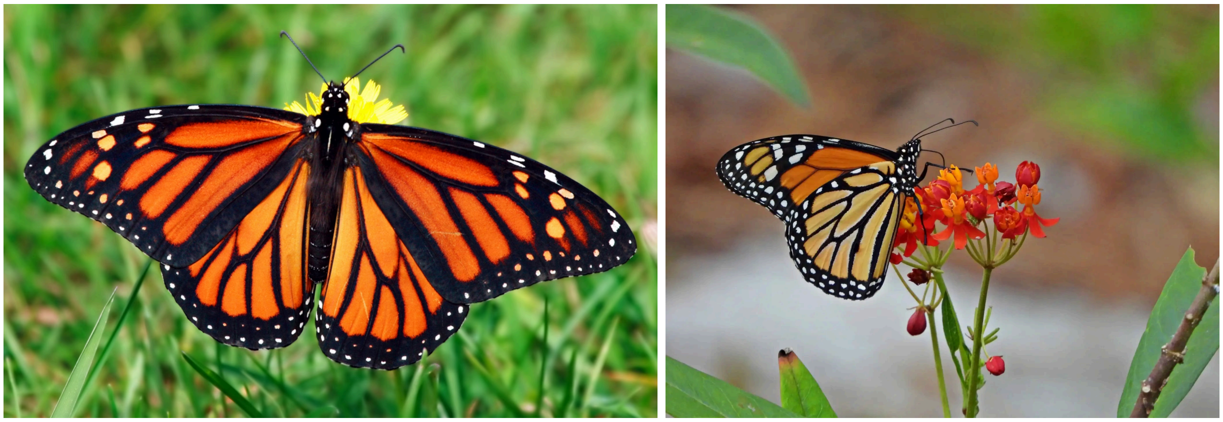
California two-spot octopus
Octopus bimaculoides



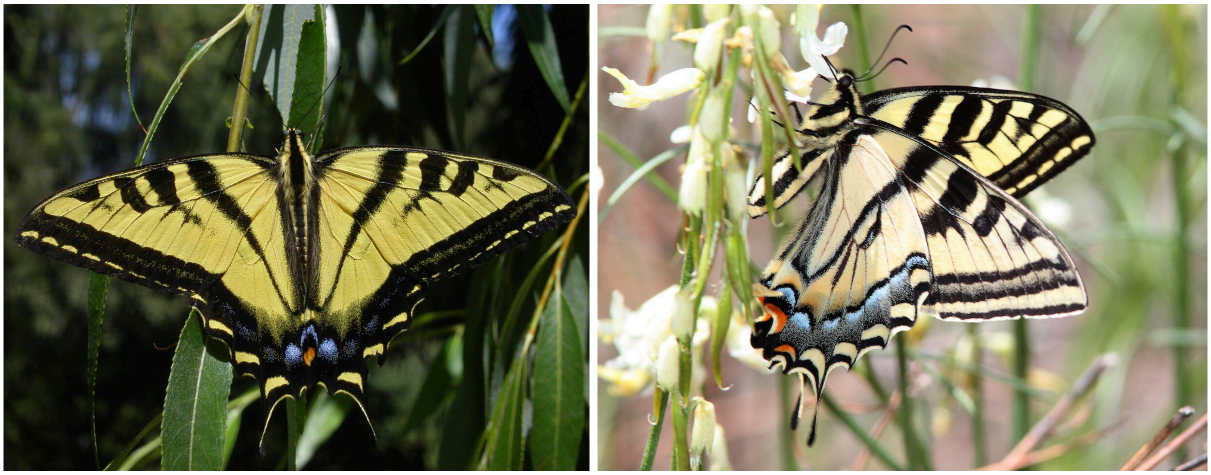
Opalescent inshore squid
Doryteuthis opalescens

Arthropods

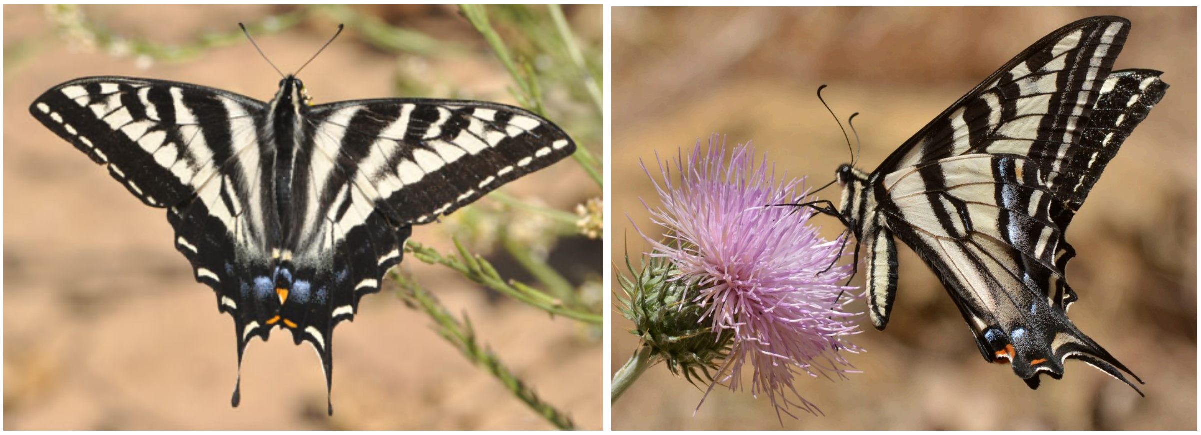
Insects



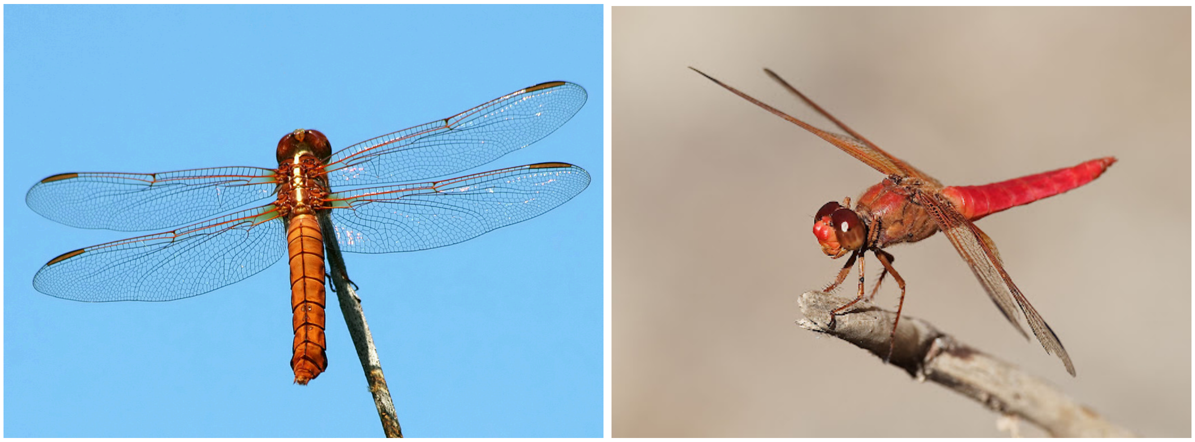
Monarch butterfly
Danaus plexippus



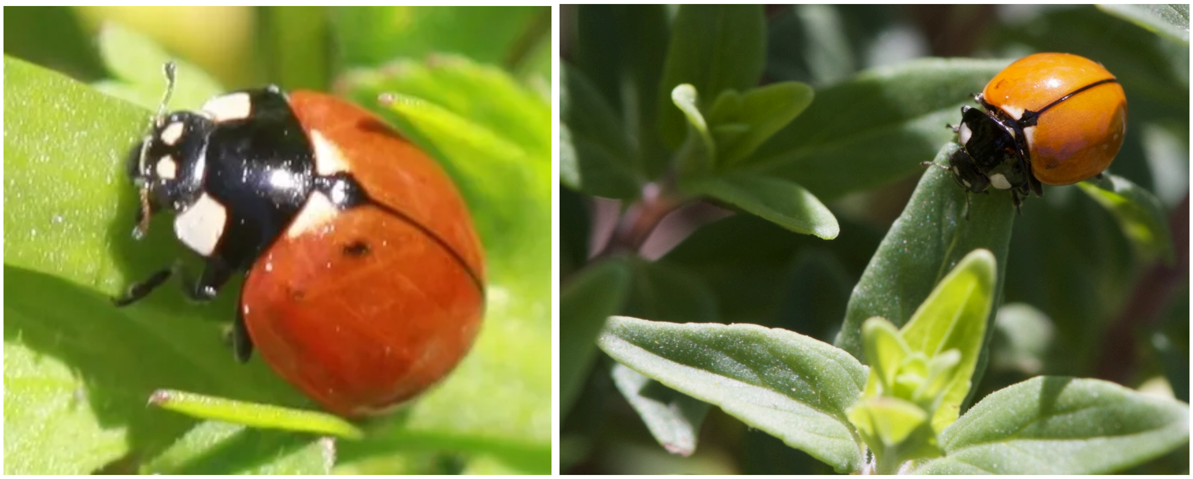
Western tiger swallowtail
Papilio rutulus



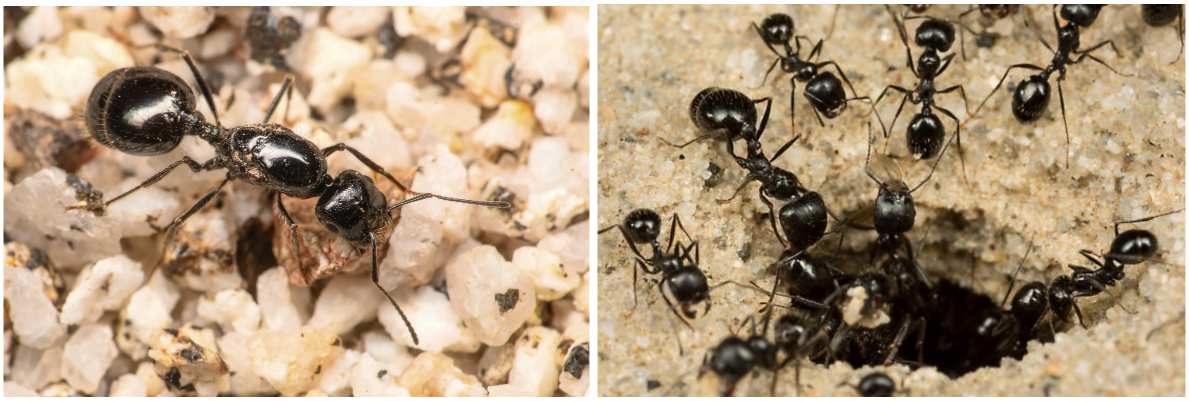
Pale swallowtail
Papilio eurymedon



Neon skimmer
Libellula croceipennis



California lady beetle
Coccinella californica

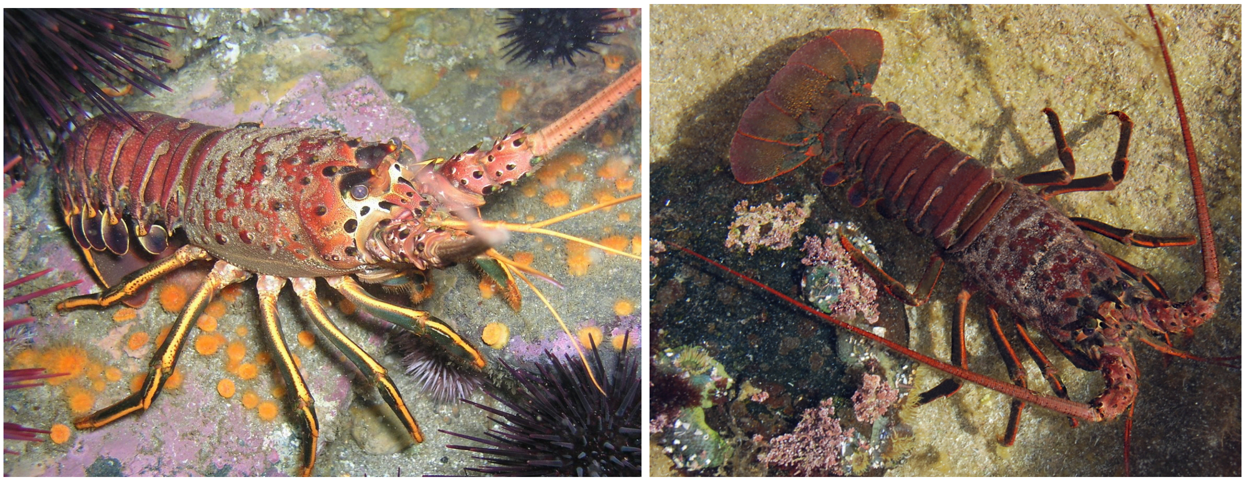


Black harvester ant
Veromessor pergandei

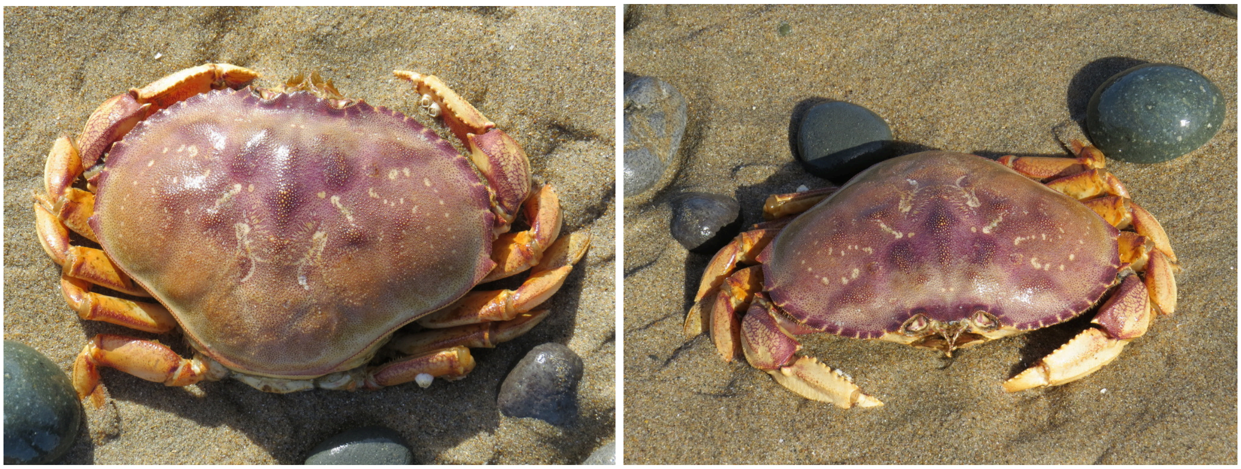
Spiders and scorpions

Centipedes and millipedes

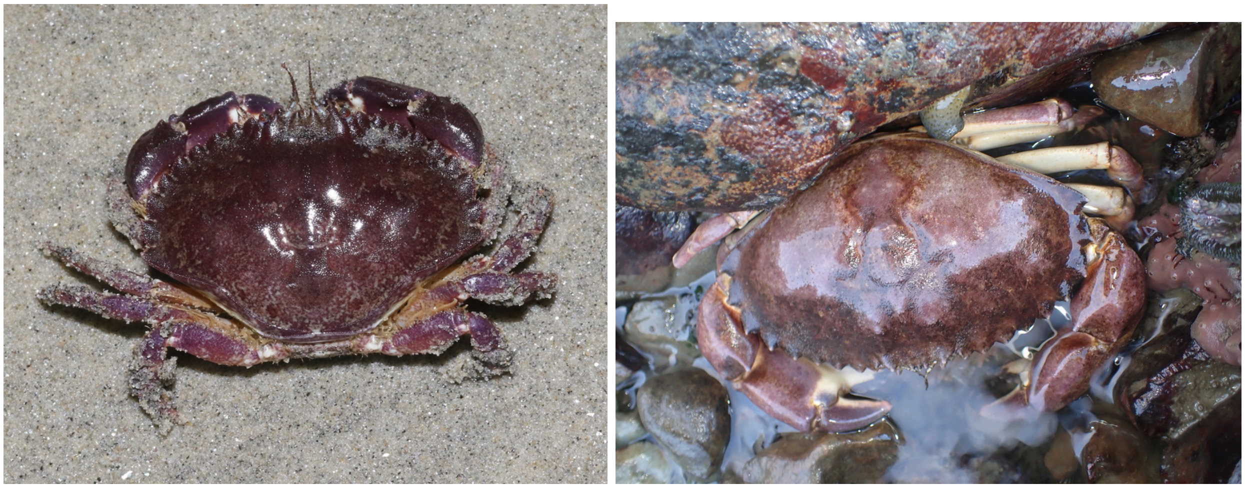
Crustaceans



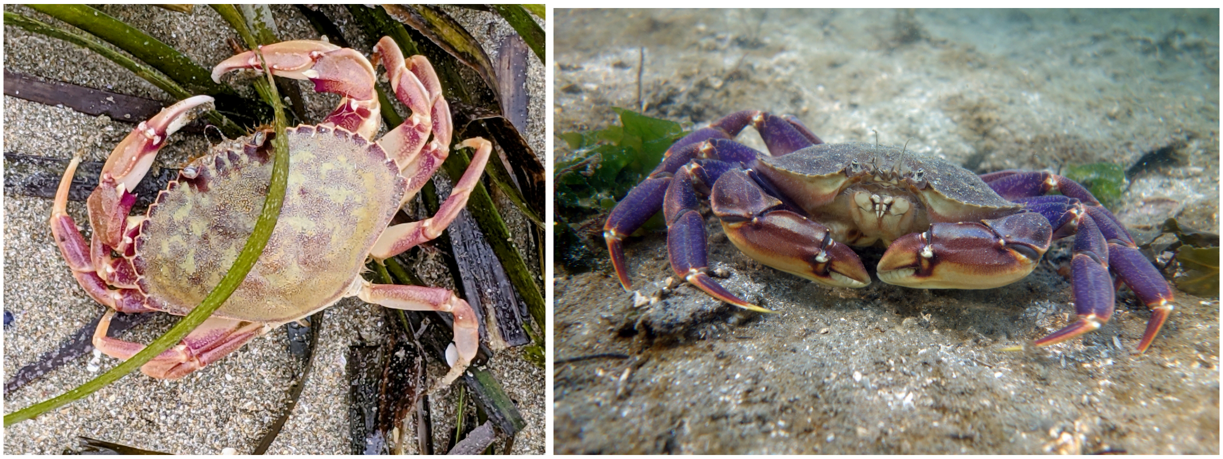
California spiny lobster
Panulirus interruptus



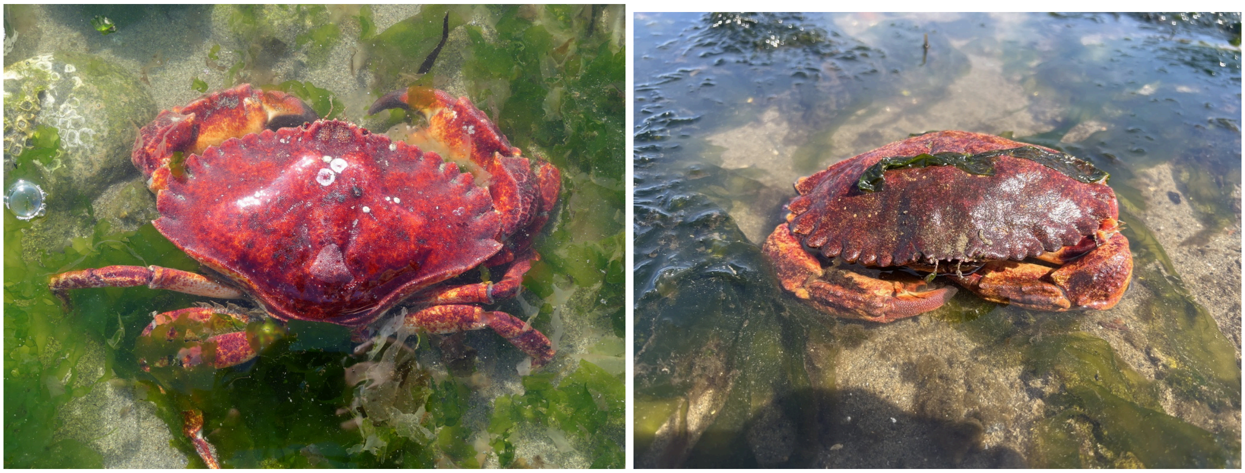
Dungeness crab
Metacarcinus magister



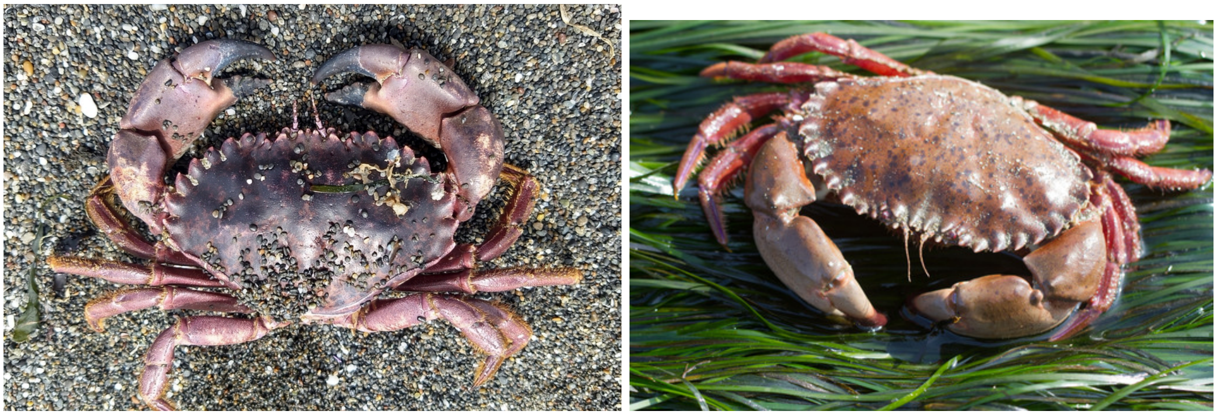
Yellow rock crab
Metacarcinus anthonyi



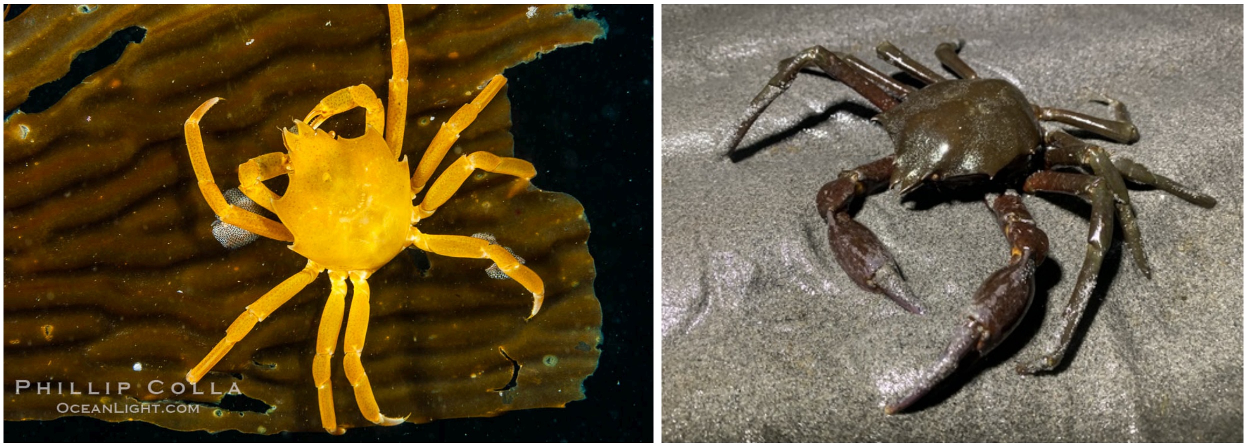
Graceful rock crab
Metacarcinus gracilis



Red rock crab
Cancer productus



Pacific rock crab
Romaleon antennarium


PHILLIP COLLA
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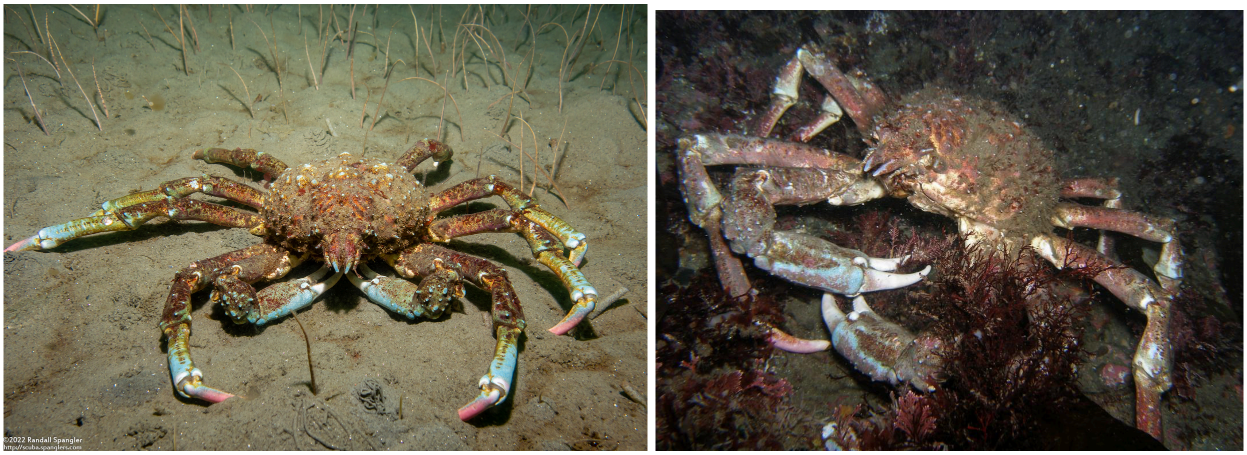
Northern kelp crab
Pugettia producta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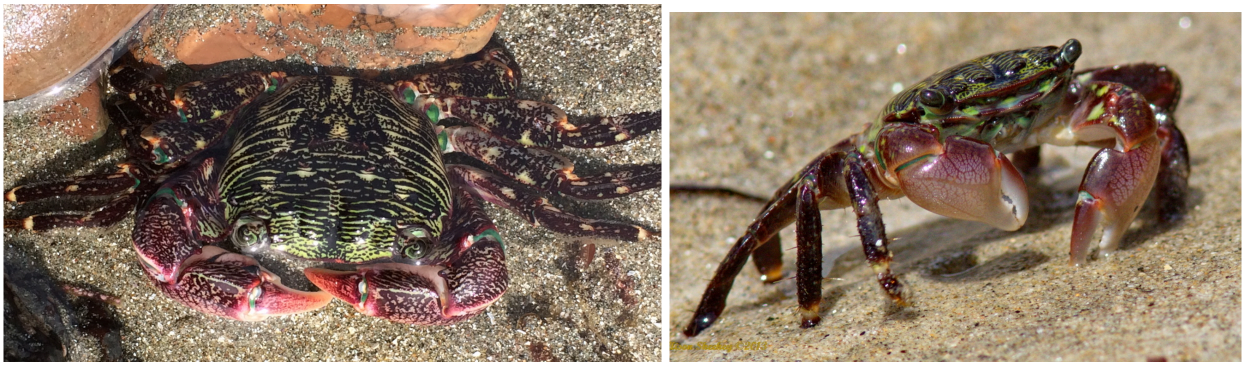
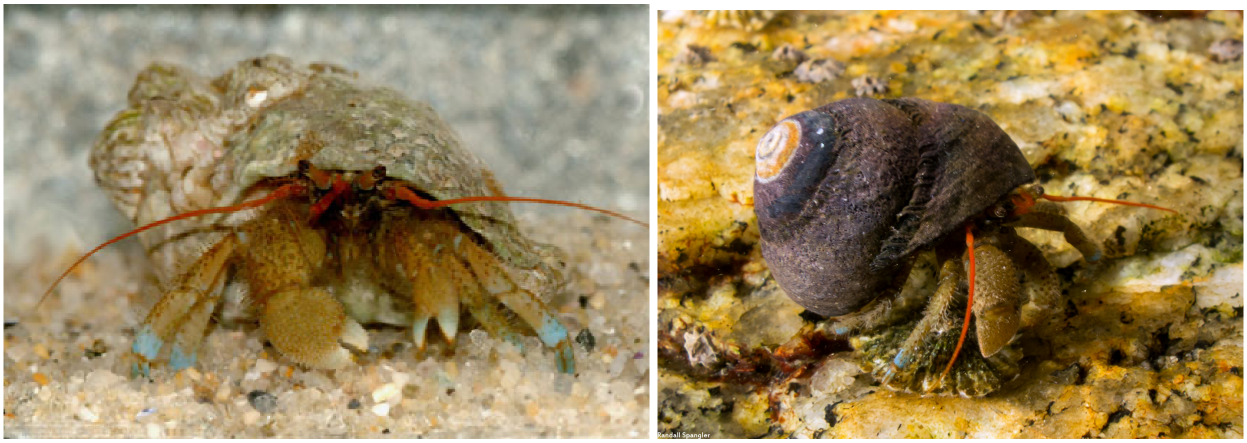
http://scuba.spanglers.com

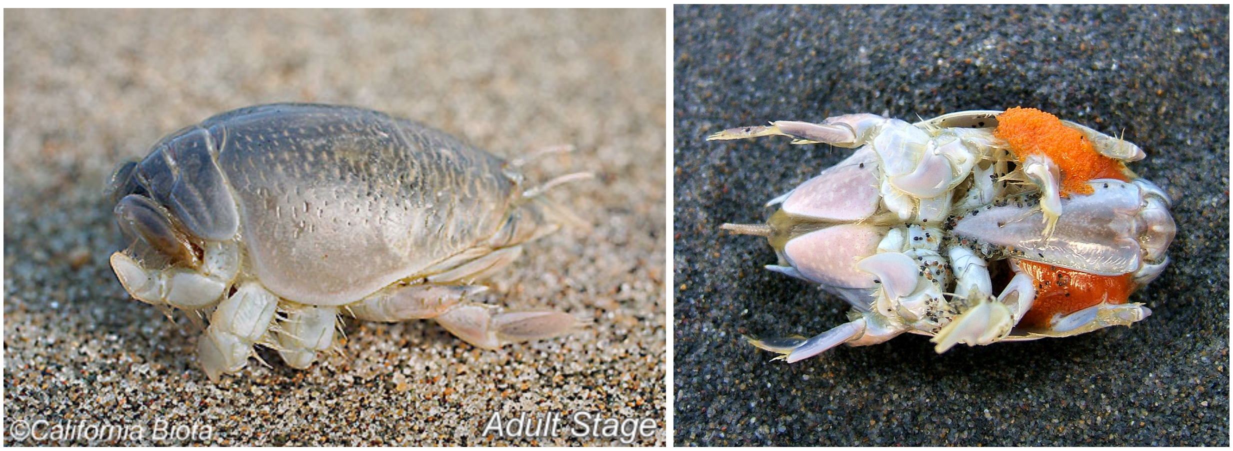
Sheep crab
Loxorhynchus grandis



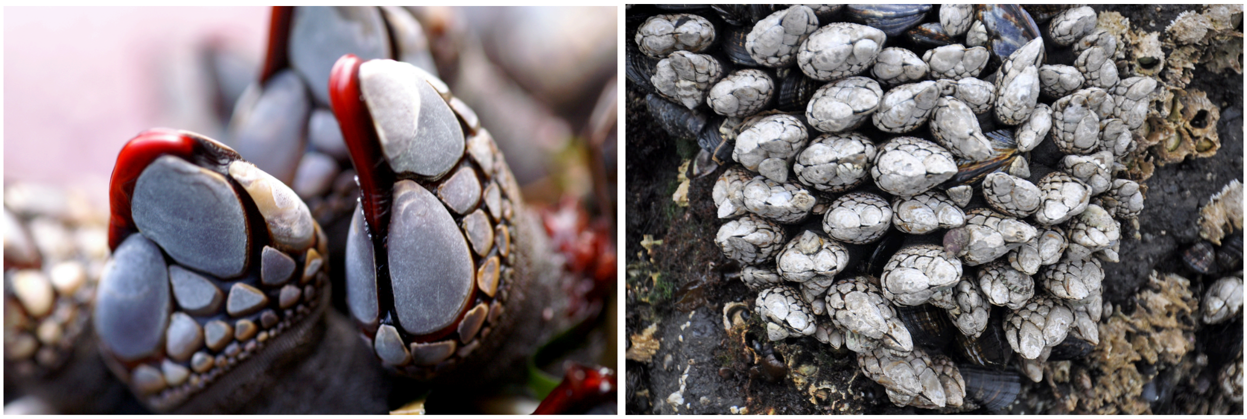
Striped shore crab
Pachygrapsus crassipes


Randall Spangler

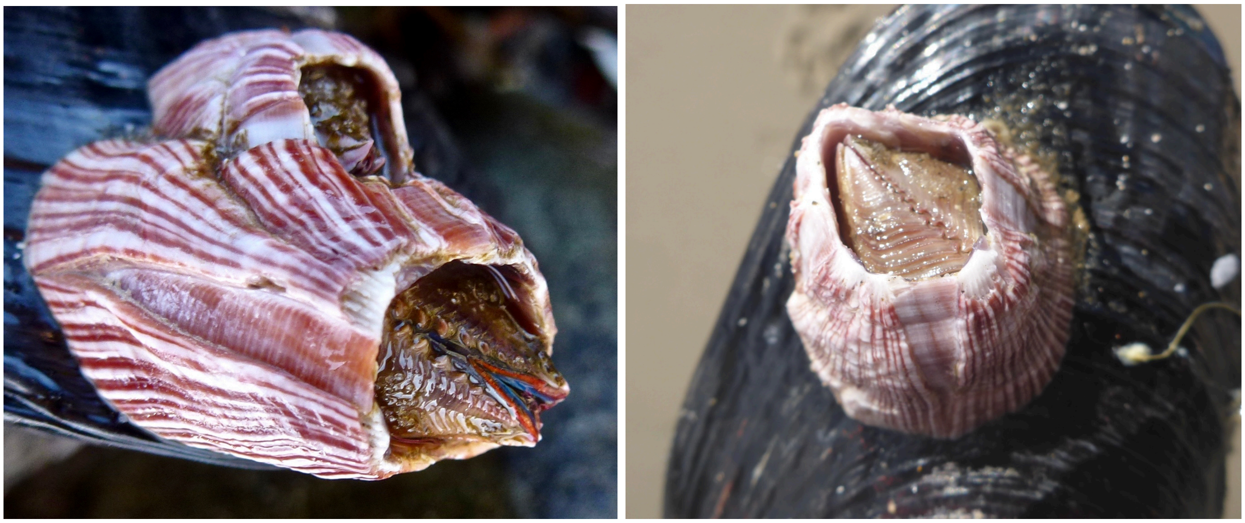
Bluebanded hermit crab
Pagurus samuelis


©California Biota
Adult Stage

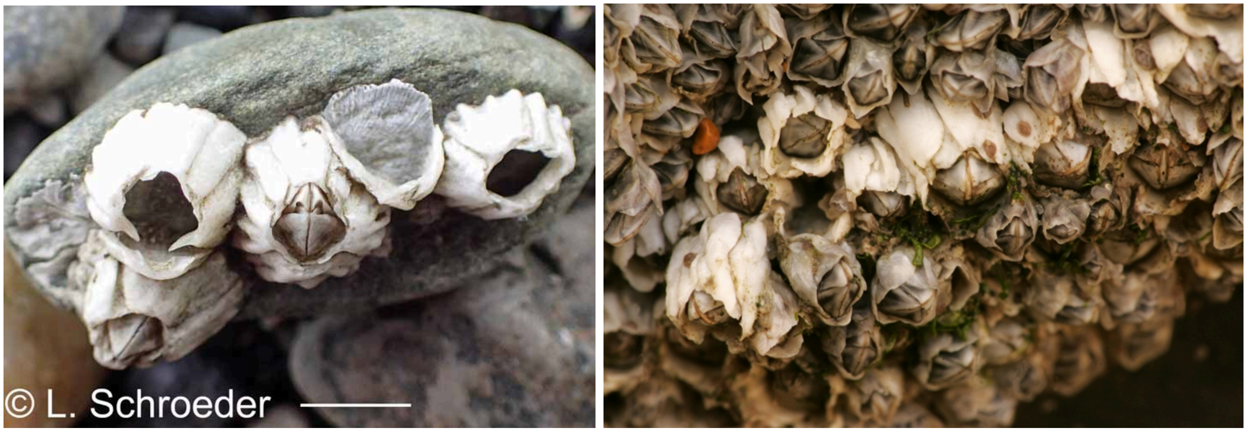
Pacific mole/sand crab
Emerita analoga



Gooseneck barnacle
Pollicipes polymerus

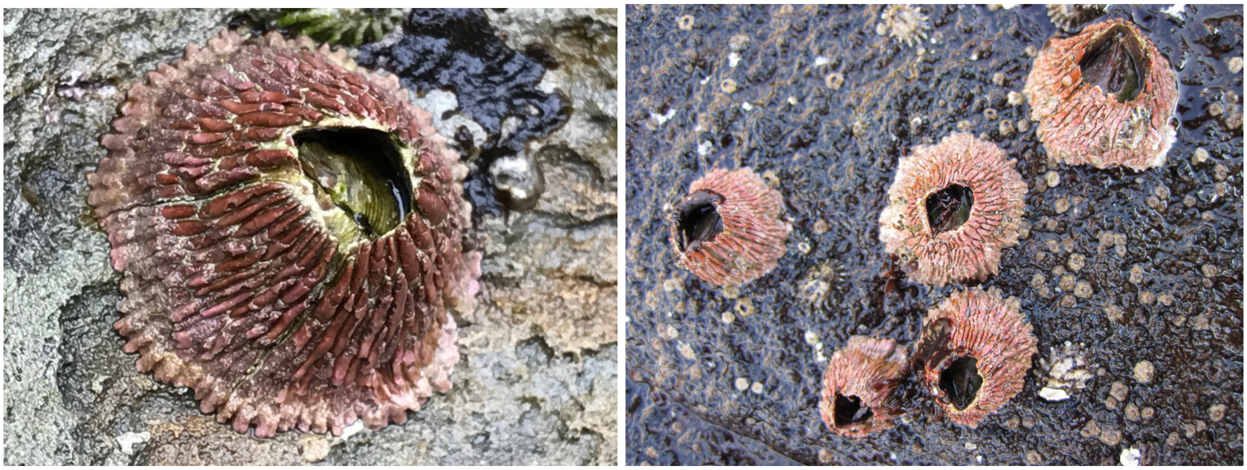


California barnacle
Megabalanus californicus



© L. Schroeder

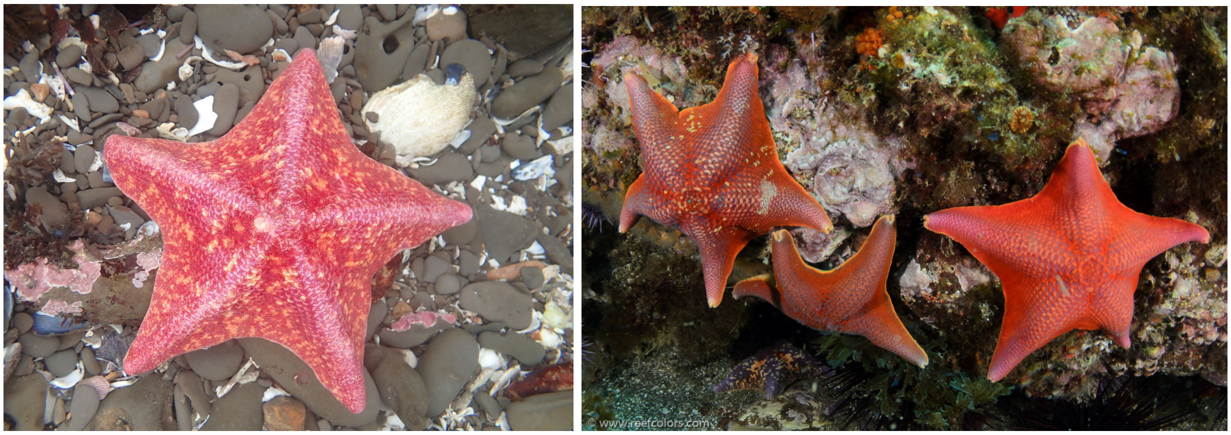
Wrinkled acorn barnacle
Balanus crenatus



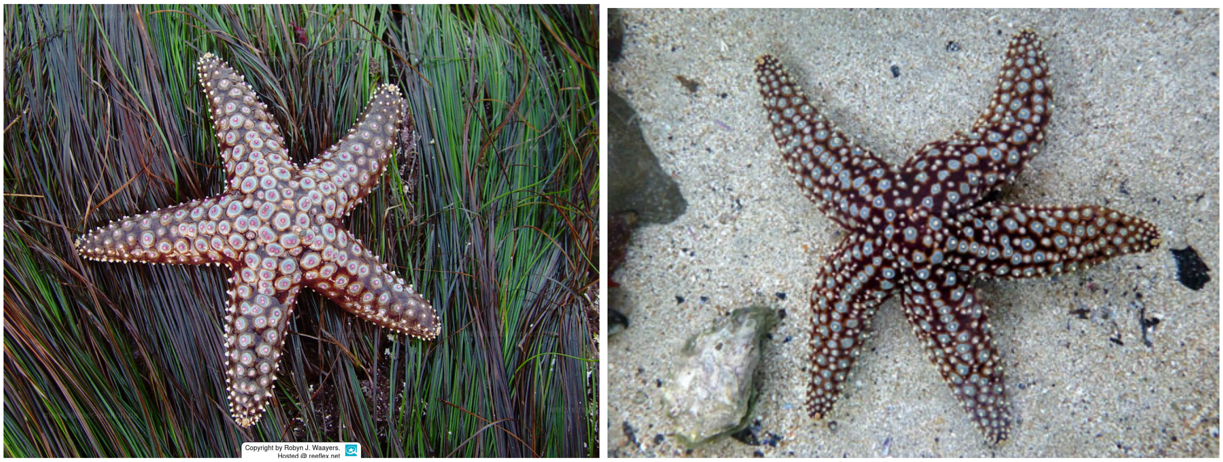
Pink volcano barnacle
Tetraclita rubescens

Echinoderms

Sea stars


© www.reefcolors.com

Bat star
Patiria miniata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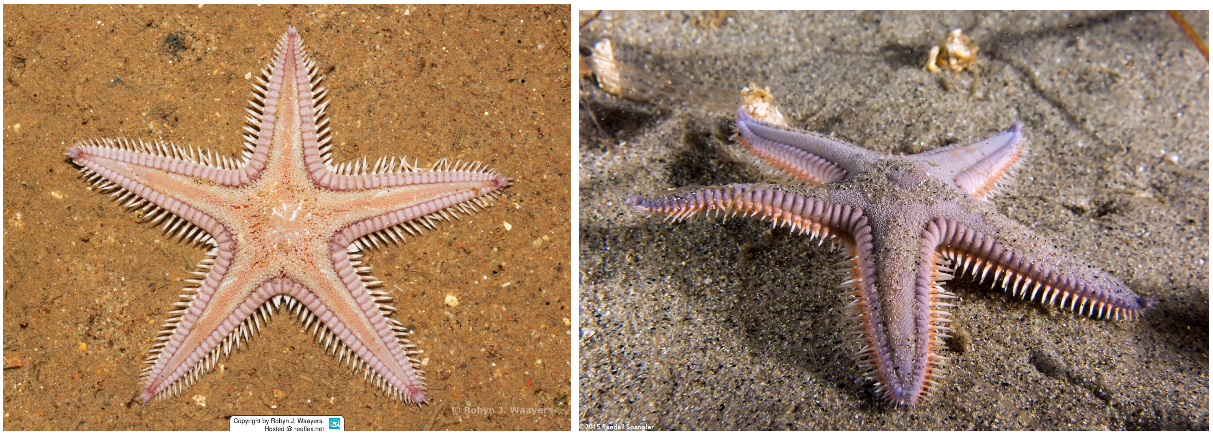
Giant spined star
Pisaster giganteus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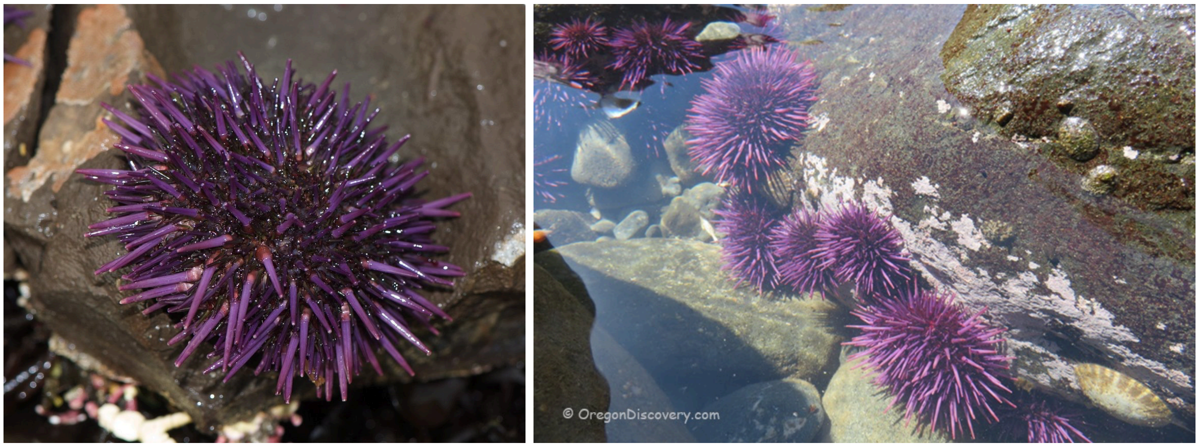
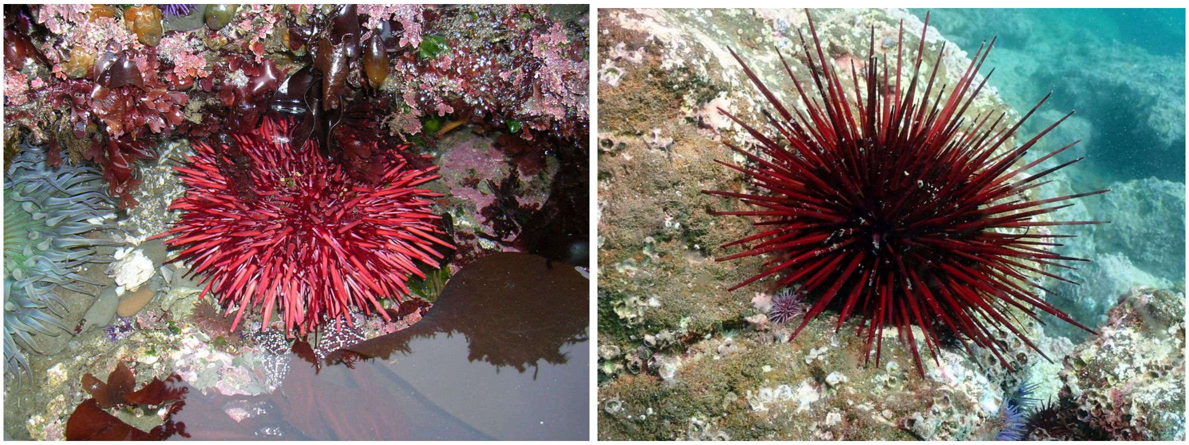
Spiny sand star
Astropecten armatus

Sea urchins

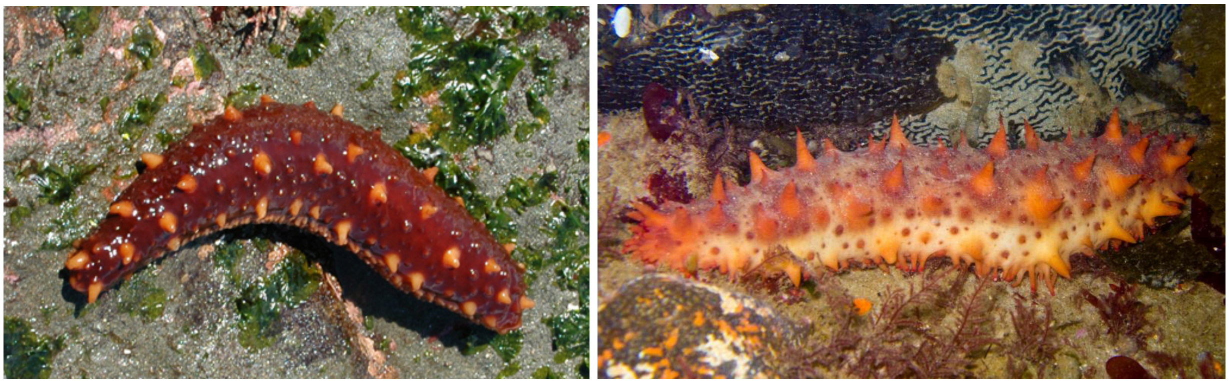

© OregonDiscovery.com

Pacific purple sea urchin
Strongylocentrotus purpuratus

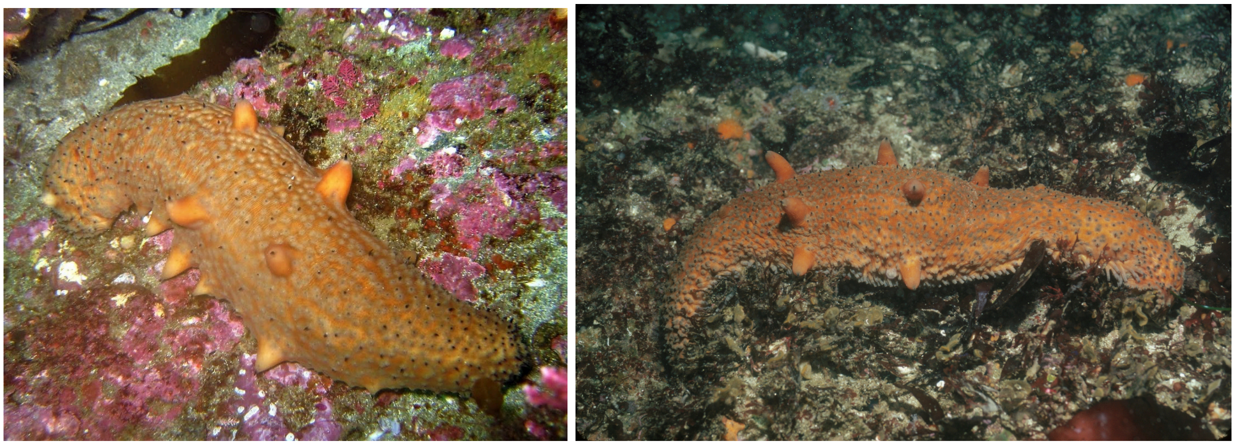


Red sea urchin
Mesocentrotus franciscanus

Sea cucumbers



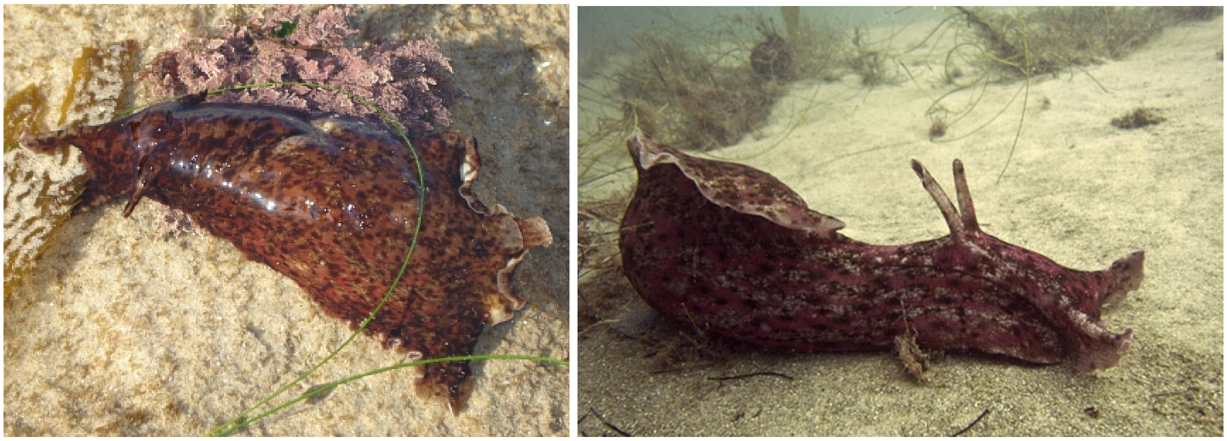
California sea cucumber
Parastichopus californicus



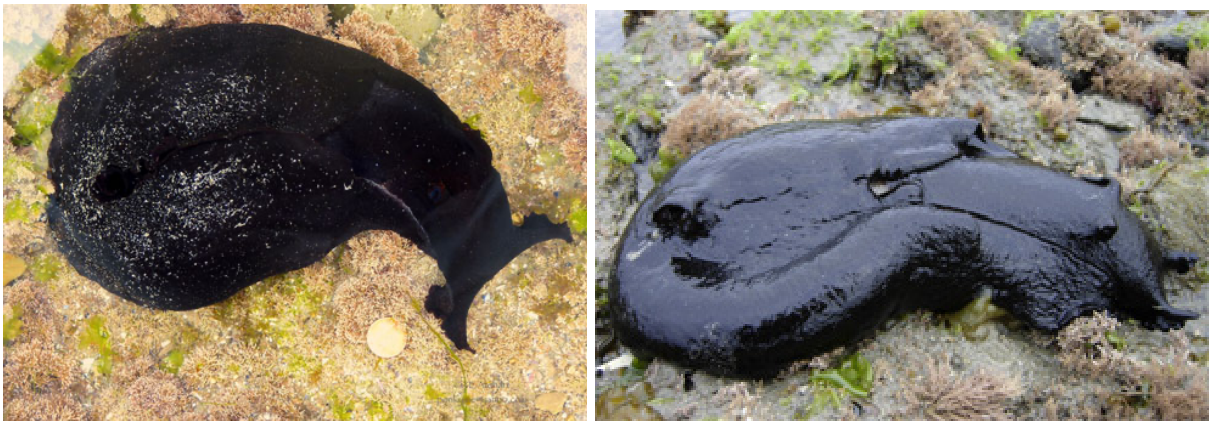
Warty sea cucumber
Apostichopus parvimensis

Sea slugs

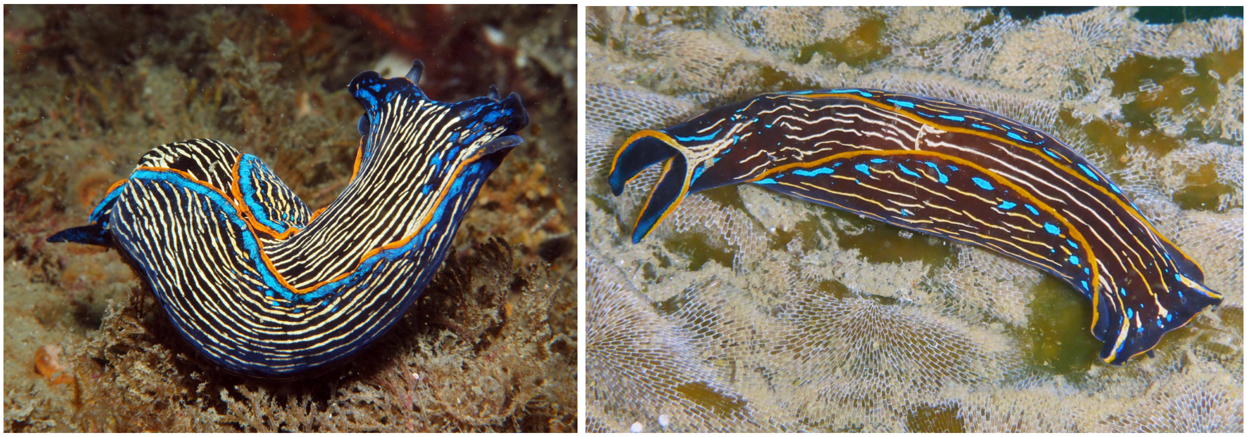
Nudibranchs



California sea hare
Aplysia californica

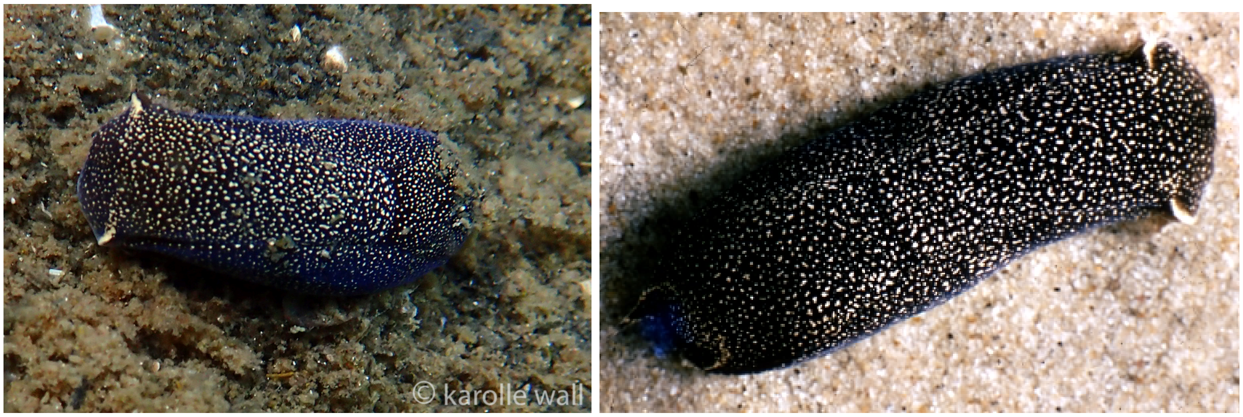


Black sea hare
Aplysia vaccaria

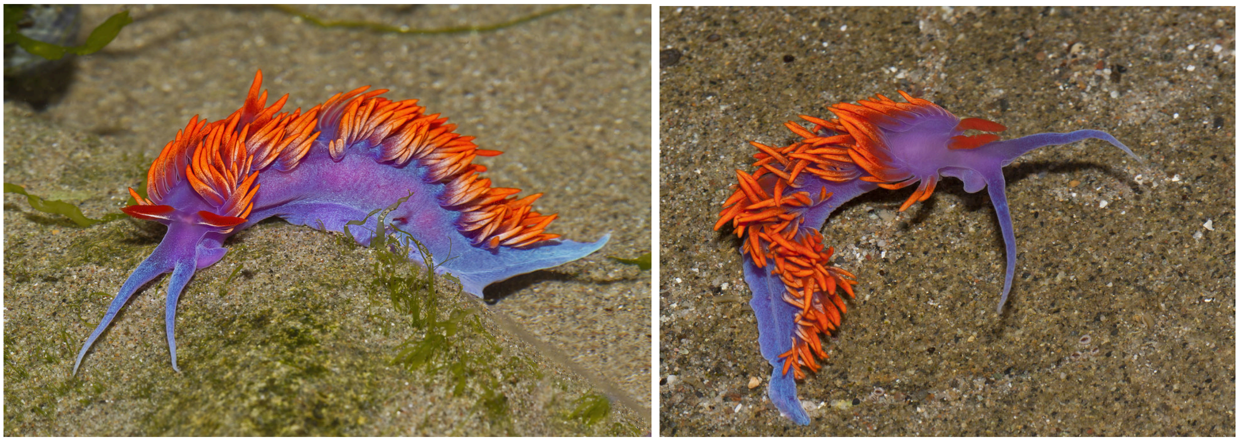


California aglaja

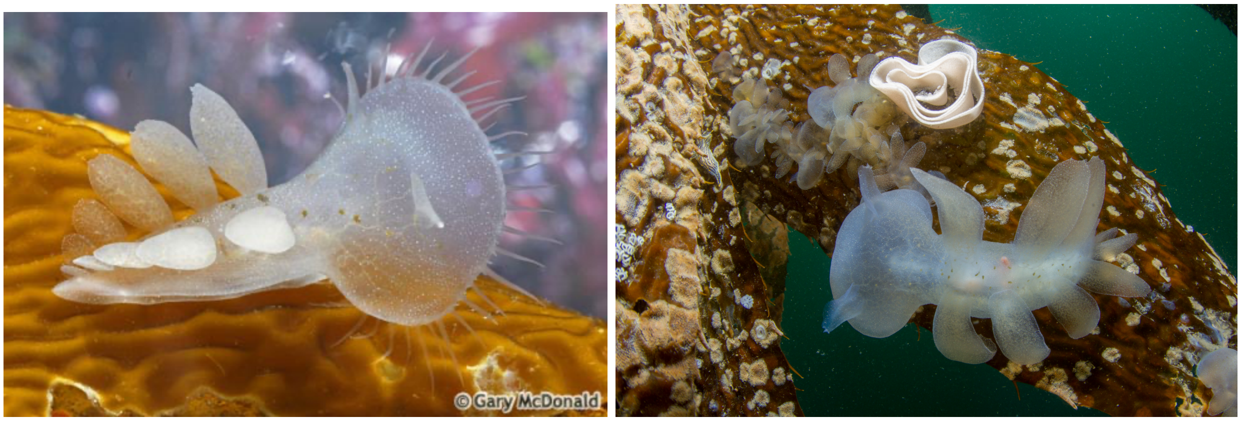
Navanax inermis


© karolle wall

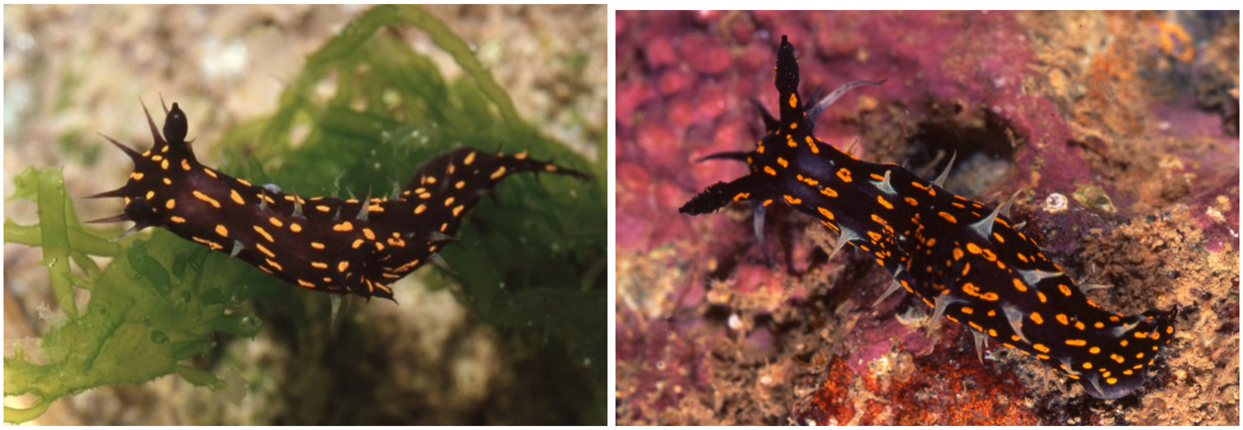
Spotted aglaja
Aglaja ocelligera



Spanish shawl
Flabellinopsis iodinea


© Gary McDonald

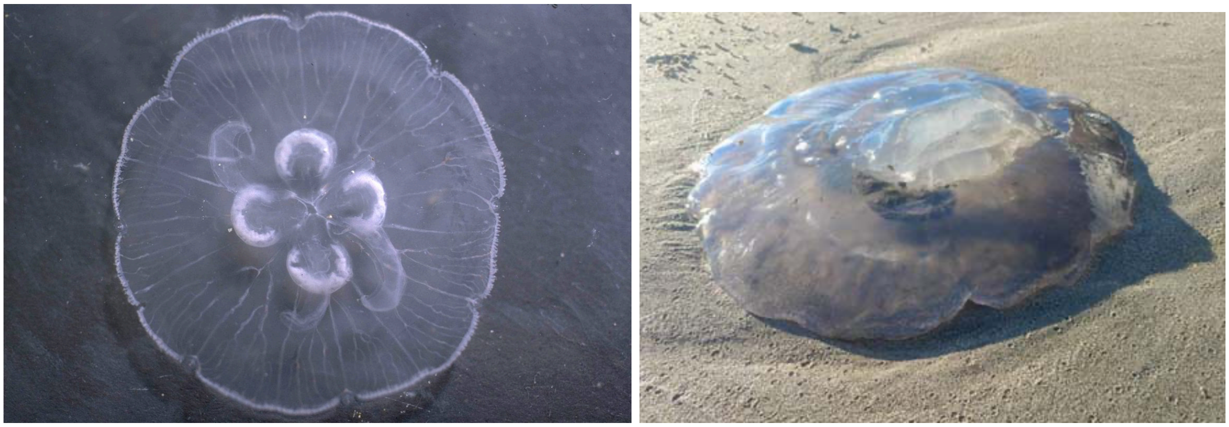
Hooded nudibranch / lion’s mane nudibranch
Melibe leonina



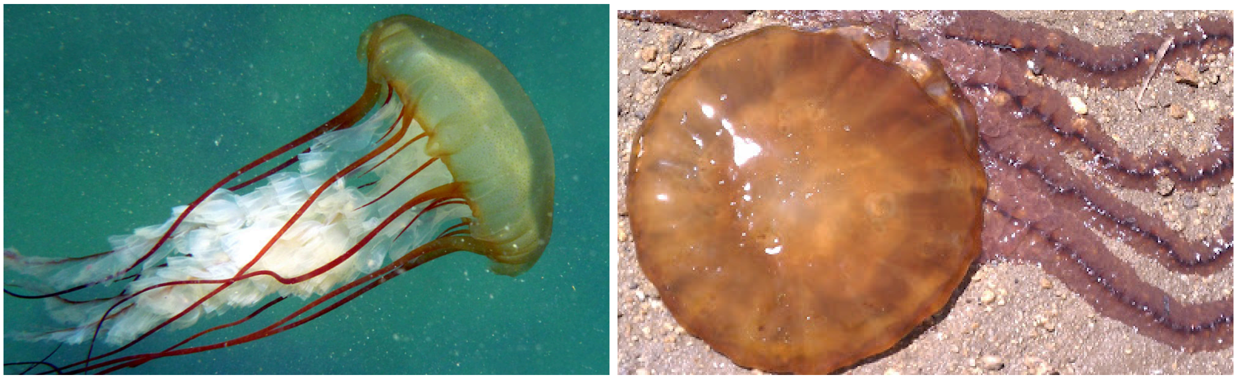
Ink stain dorid
Polycera alabe

Jellyfish

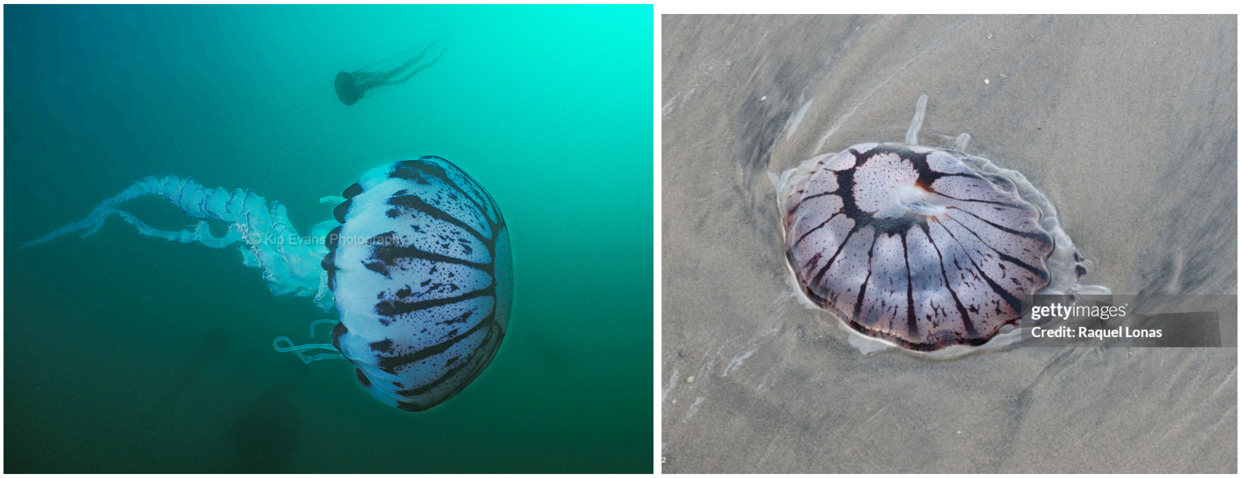
Scyphozoans



Moon jelly
Aurelia aurita



Pacific sea nettle
Chrysaora fuscescens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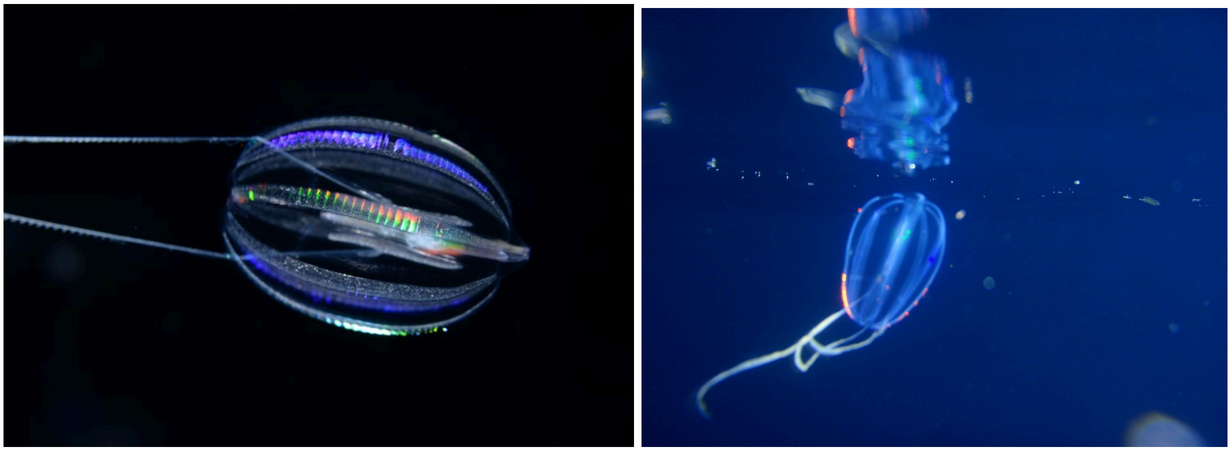
Credit: Raquel Lonas

Purple striped jelly
Chrysaora colorata

Comb jellies
Ctenophora

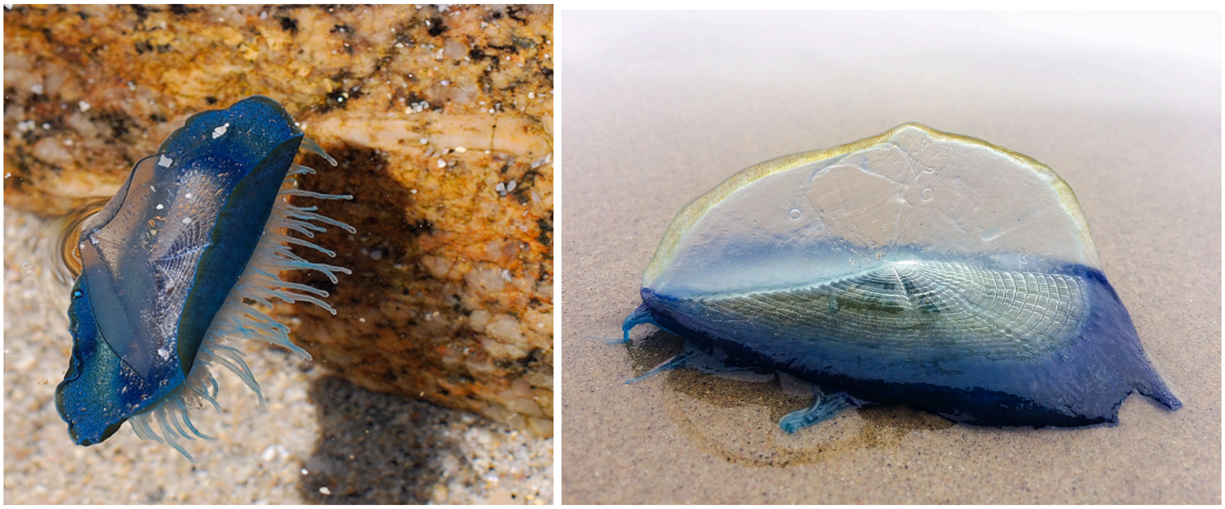


California comb jelly
Hormiphora californensis

meerwasser-lexikon.de
reeflex.net

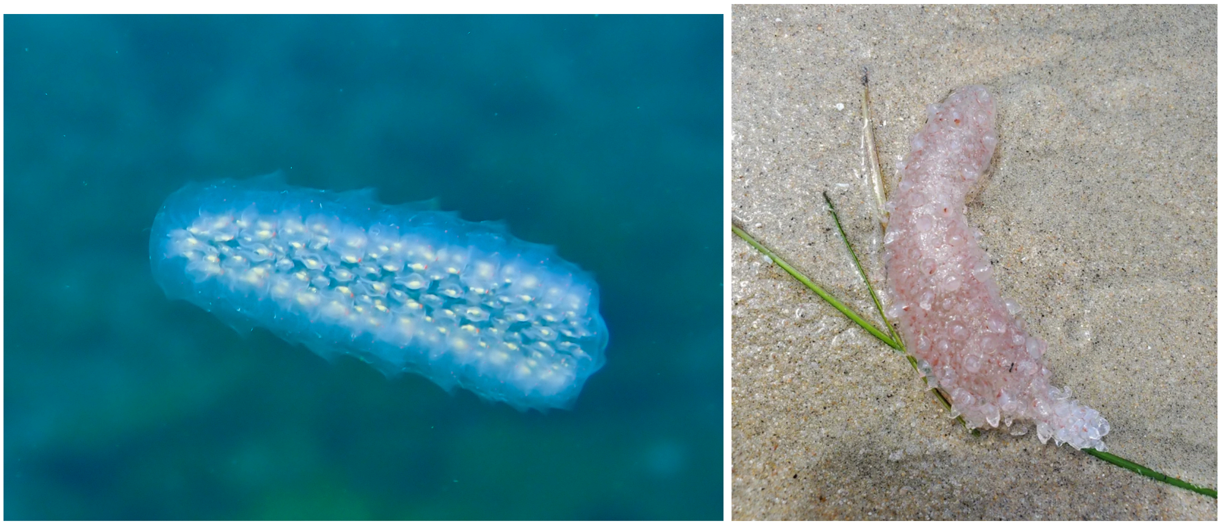
Northern comb jelly (distinct from “common northern comb jelly”)
Beroe cucumis

Hydrozoa



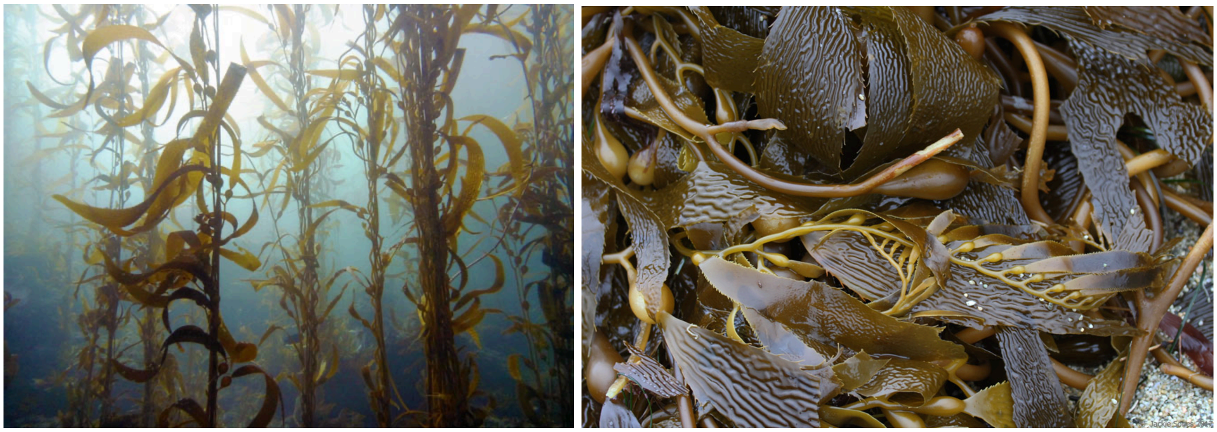
By-the-wind sailor
Velella velella

Pyrosoma

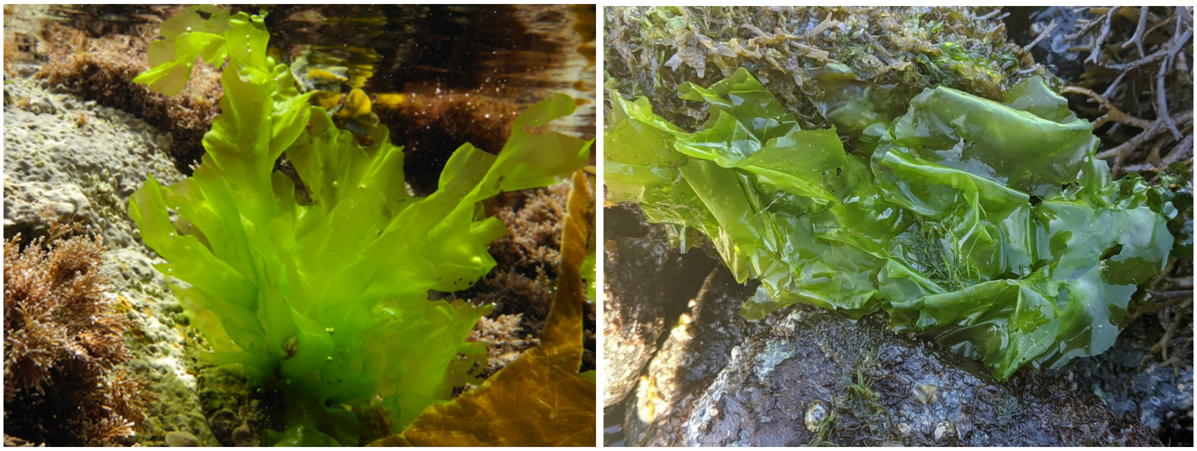


Pyrosoma atlanticum

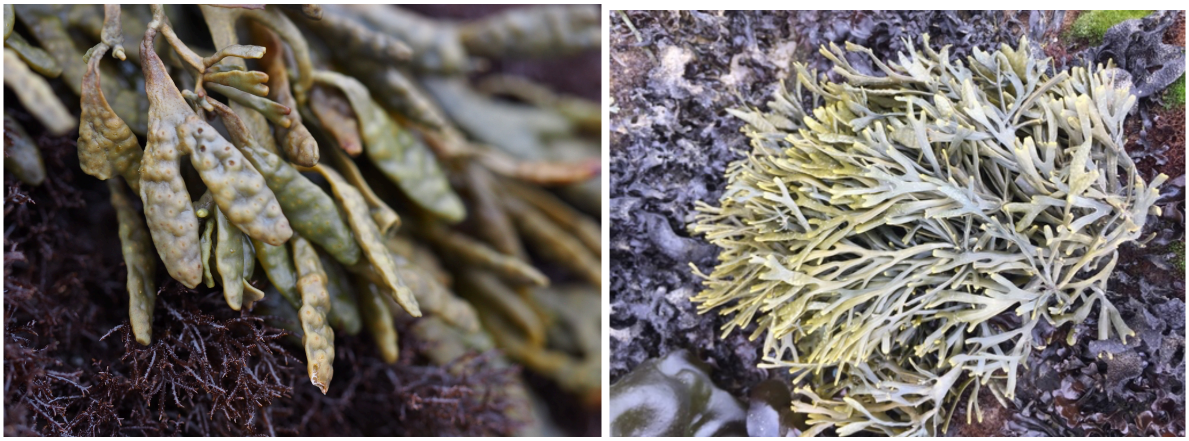
ALGAE



Giant kelp
Macrocystis pyrifera

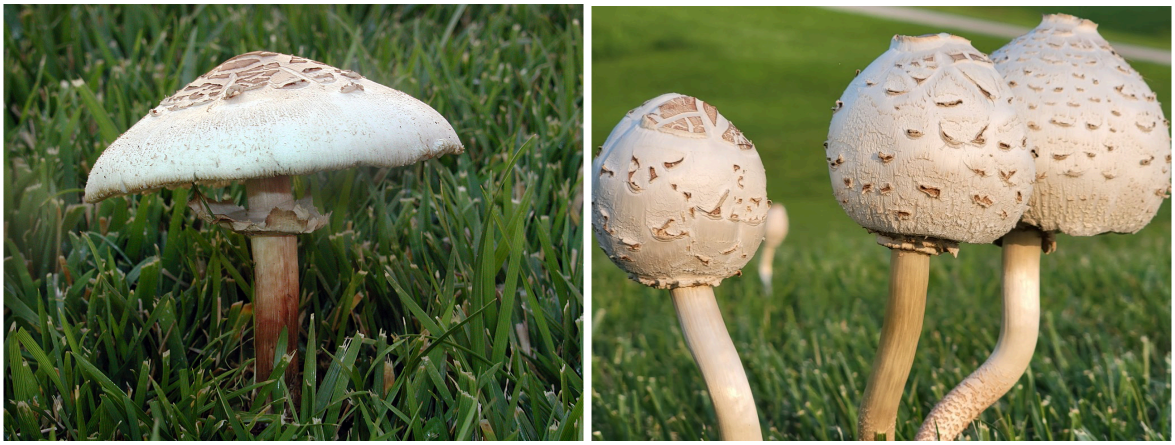


Sea lettuce
Ulva lactuca

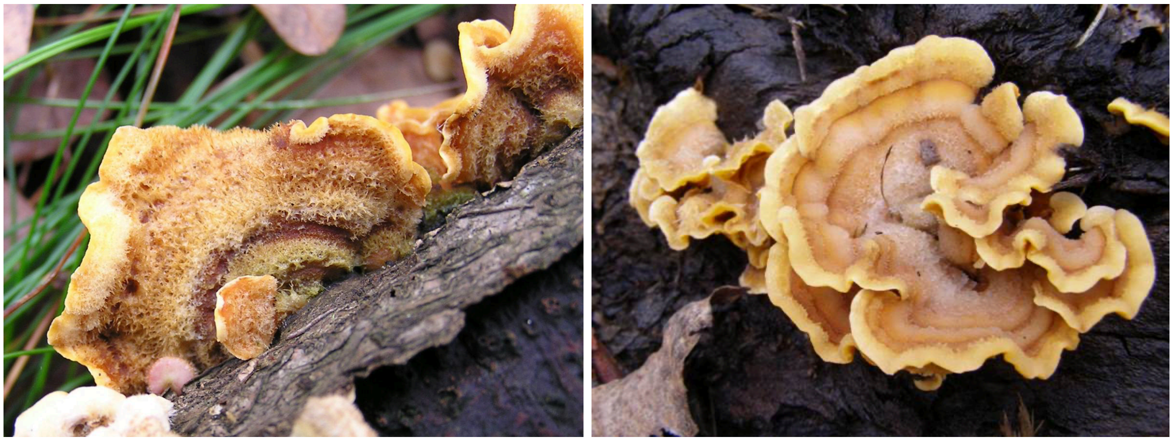


Golden rockweed
Silvetia compressa

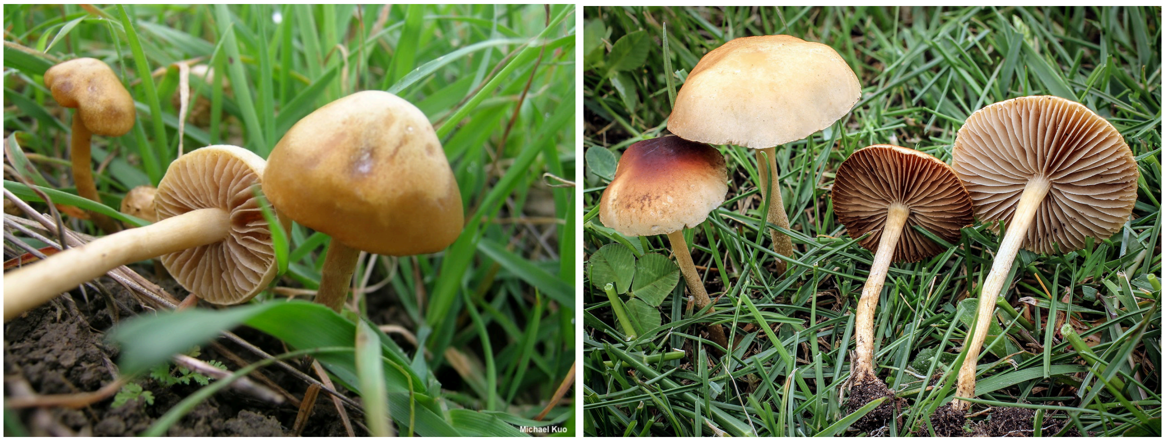
FUNGI



False parasol
Chlorophyllum molybdites



False turkey tail
Stereum hirsutum



Common fieldcap
Agrocybe pediades

Natural Spaces in LA County

Central Los Angeles

- Griffith Park
- Trebek Open Space
- Briar Summit Open Space Preserve

South Bay

- Ocean Trails Reserve

West Los Angeles

- Leo Carrillo State Beach
- Red Rock Canyon Park

San Gabriel Valley

- Mount Baldy

San Fernando Valley

- Chatsworth Nature Preserve

Santa Clarita Valley

- Castaic Lake State Recreation Area

Antelope Valley

- Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve

Volunteer Opportunities

Your attention and efforts can help preserve the flora and fauna of Los Angeles. Attached are some local volunteer opportunities.

Friends of Ballona Wetlands

Friends of the Los Angeles River

California Native Plant Society

North East Trees

Mujeres de la Tierra

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

Heal the Bay

Planting a Native Garden

Planting a native garden can reduce water usage and support native species habitat.

Calscape

Calscape Virtual Garden Guide

Caring for Native Plants

Additional Resources

Calflora

California Marine Species Portal

California Herpes

iNaturalist

Further Reading

Mental health and natural landscapes

Plant awareness linked to plant relevance

Contact

Hi! My name is Keira Norrell and I am an Environmental Studies and Marine Biology student at the University of Southern California. I created this guide to account for a lack of clear, concise, and accurate information about the native life in Los Angeles County. My hope is that it will be able to provide both knowledge and new perspectives to the Los Angeles community. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Contact me at:

keiranorrell@verizon.net

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No artificial intelligence was used in the making of this guide.